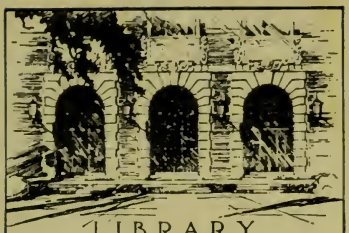

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THE

TUFT-HUNTER.

BY

LORD WILLIAM LENNOX.

"*Charlotte.* Besides, sir, I have other proofs of your hero's vanity.
"*Serjeant Circuit.* Cite them.
"*Charlotte.* The paltry ambition of levying and following titles.
"*Serjeant.* Titles! I don't understand you.
"*Charlotte.* I mean the poverty of fastening in public upon men of distinction, for no other reason but because of their rank; adhering to Sir John, till the baronet is superseded by my lord; quitting the puny peer for an earl; and sacrificing all three for a duke."

FOOTE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE TUFT-HUNTER.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Yesterday se'ennight we all dined together in the Spinnie, a most delightful retirement belonging to Mr. Throckmorton of Weston. Lady Austen's lackey and a lad that waits on me in the garden drove a wheelbarrowful of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *fête champêtre*. A board, laid over the top of the wheelbarrow, served us for a table; our dining-room was a root-house, lined with moss and ivy.

At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under a great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheelbarrow served us for a tea-table. We then took a walk in the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening, without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other: a happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of."—Cowper's *Letter to Unwin, July* 29, 1781.

There is something in the succession of visiters at a country-house which produces a mingled sensation of pleasure and pain. The

gratification arising from what may be called a "fresh infusion," is too often counterbalanced by the regret of losing an agreeable companion; and it generally happens, when the visit does not exceed a week, that it is not until the fourth or fifth day of it that one gets really to like the individual who is destined to go on the seventh. In point of fact, people who merely meet in London society know nothing of each other. There do, of course, exist friendships in London which have been grounded and established either by family connexions or early association; but it is only by constant intercourse—the unstarched intercourse of a country-house—that the real qualities of mind, and especially of temper, can be tested.

Among the new arrivals was Lord Delahaye, a young man of noble birth and *ig*noble exterior, small fortune, tolerable wit, expensive habits, and great fashion. His resolve had long been to sacrifice himself some day at the

shrine of wealth by marriage; but, *en attendant*, he was the *cicisbeo* of any lady of decided fashion who chose to take the trouble of making advances to him. Mrs. Harcourt Evans having, therefore, laid the train, he fell instantly into the most spirited flirtation possible.

One advantage which Lord Delahaye possessed we have omitted to mention. He had a flexible tenor voice, and sang with taste—a valuable accomplishment for a young gentleman who is desirous to be on good terms with the ladies.

The breakfast-table was, as usual, set in full order at ten o'clock; some guests, it would seem, being expected on the present occasion. The fresh sunshine of April which streamed in upon the exquisitely white damask table-cloth, and glittered upon the silver urn and tray, made the room look most cheerful and inviting.

"Well, this is a glorious breakfast!" ex-

claimed Lionel Crouch as he entered the room, his eye surveying the variety of fish, flesh, and fowl, which graced the board; "and here's a feast of reason, in the shape of newspapers and letters without end," continued he, as he carefully selected some half dozen epistles addressed to himself, and bearing the name of some titled personage in the corner (for in the days we write of, the franking system had not been discontinued). "Ah! here's a letter from Riversdale, and one from Millbanke. What can he have to say?"

And thus he went on commenting upon the names of no less than five peers, and one M.P.; all of whose communications, be it known to the reader, were nothing but replies to the Tuft-hunter's applications for franks "for a young lady who was collecting autographs."

In the midst of this colloquy, the groom of the chambers was seen, rather than heard, to pass behind the chair of each guest, with a

small memorandum book and pencil in his hand, whispering to each in their turn, "My lord, do you fish to-day?—Will your ladyship have the open or close carriage?—Do you ride, sir?"

But let us pause one moment and expatiate upon an English breakfast. We speak not of a public breakfast, for that is a profanation of the word. No: we mean an English breakfast, which unites the refinement of the present age with the good old customs of our ancestors. There is nothing like it in all the world besides. There is a purity and freshness in the first greetings of the morning, in the look of all and everything about us. The slumber of night has subdued man's stormy passions, and woman—gentle woman—beams with the light of heaven; the rosy breath of morn plays upon her cheek, and tells us that guardian angels have watched her in sleep. There is a purity and freshness in the order of the table, the snowy damask, the steaming

urn, the simple china, the polished glass, clear and sparkling as the crystal ice which cools the riches of the dairy, the perfume of the Mocha, and, last, not least, the massive sideboard; the roast beef of old England towering in the centre, surrounded with home-made produce, game-pies, potted meats, dried salmon, and, supported by the foreign allies of *pâtés de foie gras* of Strasburg, perigord of France, Westphalian hams, and *Thon mariné*.

There is a peculiar charm in the daughters of England, from the contrast they present to all the rest of womankind; and nowhere does that charm shine more conspicuously than during the morning meal. See the genuine English girl:—her simplicity, which has no feeling to conceal but the maiden love betrayed in her tell-tale blush; her modest glance, which, instead of boldly seeking admiration, drops timidly from the gaze of him she loves best; her principle, which can imagine no delight in what her judgment disapproves;

her mind, so stored with all those virtues that can embellish home, so unskilled in the tactics which others think needful for independence abroad, establishing her dominion at once by her superiority and her most endearing appeal for protection.

What a contrast is a country breakfast to that wretched languid affair, of heavy eyes and aching limbs, nauseated palates and jaded spirits, a London breakfast during the season. When the cups "that cheer but not inebriate" are swallowed mechanically, the dainties, even from the hands of a *cordon bleu*, are thrust away untasted. The statesman, worn out after the excitement of his speech and a tedious night in the atmosphere of St. Stephens; the gamester, broken down in health, spirit, and fortune by his nocturnal orgies; the beauty, jaded in mind and body by her heartless career of never-ceasing dissipation, will each or all bear witness that a London breakfast in the season is a joyless repast.

But to our breakfast. Who could look on this, nor feel its charm? Though appetite were wanting, the mind might feast; for it is a goodly sight to see the young, the innocent, and beautiful assemble, all arrayed in that undeviating neatness which is purely English; the morning sun shining brightly, and a rich English landscape looking in at the windows. This is worth a thousand dinners. It opens the heart to all that is good, and kindly, and social; it strengthens and fortifies all against the cares, and labours, and ills of the coming day. Nothing can exceed the charm of the happy, artless hour of an English breakfast, which, if there be but a party of the preceding night, or one in prospect to talk over, is then complete indeed.

Such was the case on this memorable morning, to the delightful meal of which we have invited our readers.

Among the subjects discussed was a question respecting the antiquity of a ruined abbey

in the neighbourhood; and when its date had been satisfactorily settled between Mrs. Harcourt Evans and Lord Marsland, the picturesque beauty of its situation was eulogised by both. In this they were cordially joined by Miss Callendar, who had already visited the spot.

"And why have we never seen St. Olave's Abbey?" said Lady Godalcan, addressing her husband. "Here is Miss Callendar, who has not been half as many days in the country as I have years, seems perfectly familiar with it, whilst I have always heard this sacred edifice spoken of as one so remotely situated as to be quite beyond the reach of fashionable women in these days. Pray, Sir Trevelloe, have you ever visited it yourself?"

"I — my lady! Why, yes, — and it is one of the most interesting sights in Cornwall."

"Then why, Sir Trevelloe, have you never taken us to see it?"

"The spot is quite inaccessible for a carriage; and it is too long a walk for ladies."

"Then we must forgive you, I suppose, though I should wish much to see it."

"Could we not all contrive to go there together?" said the hostess. "A carriage road passes within two miles of it; a pic-nic at the old abbey would be delightful."

Lady Godalcan hardly permitted her to finish the sentence before she exclaimed: "What a charming plan! Some can ride, others go in the carriages; and a pilgrimage on foot to good St. Olave's shrine would be perfect."

All present were unanimous in giving their cordial affirmatives to the proposed plan, and the preliminaries were speedily arranged.

Most of our readers have enjoyed the *désagrément* of a pic-nic party. Our motto to this chapter describes one given by the poet Cowper, which seems to have been an exception to the general rule. Whether that of Mrs. Harcourt Evans was so, remains to be

seen. Certain it is that, as the day approached, she was in anything but her best disposition. She was plagued and worried. She had planned the pic-nic under the impression that she was making everybody's happiness by it; but now the day was arrived, notes of excuses came, instead of half the people she expected. One lady sent word that she was sure it would rain: she would come if she was really wanted, but she would send her husband to do the agreeable for her—he doated on a pic-nic.

"Pic-nic!" growled Snarlbrook, to whom a fit of the gout had by no means restored his *easy* flow of temper. "Pic-nic! Damp grass! —damp plates!—damp spirits!"

Montressor protested he liked the rurality of the plan; and Frank was quite on the *qui vive* about it. Both raised their voices in favour of so delightful a party.

Snarlbrook was determined to have the last word—"And so, to achieve that most un-

comfortable of all meals, a pic-nic, we are to leave our substantial home and all its numerous luxuries; and for what?—to sit on wet grass, and thus ensure our deaths of cold, for the gratification of eating a bad dinner with our fingers, spread on a herby table-cloth, as it is called, and listening to the exclamations between every tough morsel—'How charming! How delightfully rural!'"

On the morning appointed for the pic-nic, the sun rose as brightly as if it were determined to expose the fallacy of Moore's almanac, which had predicted rain and wind for some days. The carriages and riding-horses were at the door as the clock struck eleven; and Mrs. Harcourt Evans, with that tact and forethought for which she was famous, stood under the portico, "telling off" (as the military phrase it) her respective guests: and here we would digress, for the purpose of offering our readers a word of useful advice, which is, that upon all excursions, whether

pic-nics, visits to Vauxhall or Zoological Gardens, horticultural or archery fêtes, British Museum or National Gallery, Polytechnic or Adelaide Institutions, Epsom, Ascot, or Beulah Spa, Kensington Gardens, Diorama, Panorama, Cosmorama, Madame Tussaud's, Greenwich, Tower, Woolwich, Dulwich, and other metropolitan and suburban sights, they adopt our matchmaker's plan of "pairing off" *at first setting out;* for, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it will happen—either because you do not think it civil to change, or because somebody else thinks, or because some busy-body, prim old maid, or precise elderly bachelor of the party, makes it his or her office to keep every one in their place—that as you begin, so you will end. Which of our readers has not a vivid impression of some party of *pleasure* being marred through want of arrangement? But, to our pic-nic.

"Lord Glenfiddick, pray take Lady Godalcan, Miss Godalcan, and Lord Montressor.

Lord Marsland and Mr. Oswald will, perhaps, have no objection to go behind," said the hostess, as the party joyfully took their places; and here, as a specimen of the tact of the master or rather mistress hand, we will mention, that Lady Godalcan had a pending lawsuit in Scotland about some property, which was not very unlikely to come before the Lord of Session—Glenfiddick; that Lord Marsland was, at the ensuing election, to sue for the "sweet voices" of the electors, over whom Mr. Oswald, the present member, had no inconsiderable influence; and that Miss Godalcan had hinted at breakfast, how anxious she was to form a more intimate acquaintance with Lord Montressor.

The whole party was thus judiciously arranged. There was some little difficulty in finding "a pair" for the Irish bishop, Doctor O'Donovan, when Crouch was called to take a place by his side, and fancying he held the same rank as our episcopal bench, "my

lorded" the worthy catholic, to a most alarming extent.

At length, the last carriage drew up, Mrs. Harcourt Evans's barouche, and calling upon Vavasour to take Miss Callendar's arm, the indefatigable hostess followed them in, accompanied by Lord Delahaye.

The beauty of the morning necessarily occupied the first part of the conversation, after the party set off; but when this had been fully discussed, Mrs. Harcourt Evans sought to renew the same strain of conversation with Lord Delahaye that had so much interested her the day before; nor did she find his lordship less entertaining; but from some cause or other it did not become general. The rattling of the wheels over a rough cross-road might perhaps account for this; and, in truth, under such jolting circumstances, a low-toned dialogue with the person next you is the least fatiguing mode of amusing yourself: certain it is, that Mrs. Harcourt Evans

fairly turned round in the corner she occupied to converse more at her ease with Lord Delahaye, and Agnes and Frank Vavasour were thus left to entertain each other.

There are few things in the whole economy of nature more mysterious than the instinct which teaches a woman to know when she is beloved. It proceeds not from any acuteness of judgment, for in cases where this instinct is strongest, the judgment may fail totally, as to the stability of the sentiment inspired; but certain it is, that when a man is exclusively occupied by a tender feeling for any woman, she will very rarely fail to discover it, let him take what pains he may to disguise it.

But to return to the party in the barouche, whose resources did not appear to fail them, for when the coachman stopped to announce that they had reached the point where the path they were to follow turned off from the carriage-road, all seemed astonished to find themselves already there.

"Is this all our drive?" exclaimed Agnes Callendar; "surely we might have walked thus far without fatigue. I hope *that* is the path we are going to pursue? I never saw a more romantic walk; and what a lovely stream!"

The party now alighted from the carriage, and hurried forward along the wild track that opened so invitingly before them. It meandered onward beside a wide stream, whose noisy current had hollowed for itself a dark deep bed at the distance of thirty feet beneath the path. This steep bank was covered with jutting rocks and rude underwood, with here and there a forest tree of tolerable height and size. Nothing on a small scale could be wilder than the whole scene beneath them; the "river rushing o'er its pebbled bed;" the bank rising upward from the path at the same steep angle; and the hill-side, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with the same rough mantle of rocks, stunted oaks, yellow beeches, and ill-grown forest trees.

Lord Delahaye followed the two ladies, giving his arm to Mrs. Harcourt Evans, and Agnes walked behind them in the rugged path for a few steps alone. Vavasour, however, was close behind her; a single step in advance brought him to her side, when he presented his arm, and it was accepted. How involuntarily, how perfectly, without intention or design, do the steps of those, feeling as they felt, linger behind the rest of the party! Yet no word was spoken that the world might not have heard; the light arm that hung upon his received no pressure that the most jealous eye could discern, yet each felt that they were together, and alone; and this consciousness was of itself sufficient happiness.

At the distance of about a mile and a quarter from the point where they had quitted the carriage, the narrow path suddenly opened into a grassy area of about three acres, surrounded on all sides by a close

thicket, and in the midst of it stood the ruins of the venerable abbey of St. Olave's. One wall alone remained, with its lofty arch, and sober grey buttresses; yet the well-carved stone and the slender mullions shewed how graceful and how delicate the architecture of the building had been.

The situation fixed upon for the pic-nic was exceedingly beautiful. It was a small plot of soft green velvet turf, formerly the abbot's garden, but now surrounded at some little distance by a profusion of evergreens; while further in the background a dense foliage of numberless giant oaks spread out their graceful branches. From one side of this fairy spot, a small stream, bubbling from a clear cool spring, flowed, with a soft murmuring sound, into an ancient stone vase placed to receive it; and, in the centre of the whole stood the remains of a venerable denizen of the forest, called the abbot's oak.

Such was the place; and truly a more

fitting spot for lovers' vows could not have been selected, so sad and still, the silence broken only by the murmur of the slender spring. Vavasour felt its influence through all his frame, and it required the utmost exertion of his mingled prudence and delicacy to restrain the open expression of what was passing within him.

The pic-nic was now going on after the usual fashion of pic-nics: much show of false spirits, got up with no little effort and labour, and tempered every now and then by due fears about the weather. "Look at that cloud!" "Will it rain, I wonder?" "Only heat, you may depend." Mean time every little bit of blue sky was watched for and welcomed; and when, at last, the sun did burst forth in all its glory, the brightened countenances of the party eloquently testified how entirely the party of pleasure and the pleasure of the party were at the mercy of adventitious circumstances.

Our fog-environed countrymen know very well how to enjoy pleasure when it is properly arranged and provided for them, or when it is to consist in any actual object of sight; but they cannot find or make it for themselves. A flatness pervades their spirit at the moment its brightest powers are required: weary, stale, and unprofitable are all the best efforts to be gay. Damped and subdued, each is waiting to be amused by the others; and all are inwardly venting their spleen, not on their own insufficiency, but on the supine dullness of their neighbours. It is strange that Englishmen never appear to less advantage than at a party of pleasure. There is always an air of *gêne*. The truth is, we are a dull, silent people, incapable of flinging sunshine on the dial of life.

Delahaye, whose wit and talent were sufficient at any time to redeem, if he chose, the dullness of any party, evidently did not think it worth while to exert himself. Excepting

Lords Snarlbrook and Montressor, who were his intimate associates, no one seemed to possess sufficient interest with him to divert his attention from the table. With the former he occasionally exchanged a word, took a glass of wine with Mrs. Harcourt Evans, nodded approbation to sundry remarks on the dishes: but little else did Lord Delahaye condescend during the repast.

This indifference of *the* man of fashion gave a flat tone to the whole affair. The ladies, too, except those on a visit to Tredinnick Court, were under some little constraint, as they were strangers to many of the party. The appearance of the dessert was therefore hailed by most as a decided relief; and, dispensing with etiquette on such an occasion, the sides of the tent were opened, and the ladies, headed by the hostess, crowded to one side, to seek amusement from the antics of some young gipsy boys.

In the mean time, the younger ladies were

spared the infliction of their own society by the delicate attentions of Captain Moreton and Cornet McArthur, of the ——th hussars, who were obviously trying the battery of their well blackened mustachios and umbrageous *chevelure* upon the susceptible hearts of the two Miss Godalcans. Their seductive powers, however, rested with their capillary ornaments; for Nature had been much more lavish in the external decoration than the internal furniture of their heads. Indeed their conversational resources were so scanty, that the eyes of the young ladies wandered listlessly over the gipsies' tent in a vain attempt to beguile the weariness of the "silent system," of which they, without having committed any adequate offence, were made the innocent victims.

"See!" said Miss Maria,

> 'The hell of waters, where they howl and hiss!'"

The cornet looked, and found the lady's Byronian quotation applied, not to the Cas-

cata del Marmore of Terni, but to the gipsies' kettle.

During this interval the dullness of the rest of the party had rather increased; and the gaudy flag, that still drooped motionless on its staff from the tent, seemed a proper emblem of their listless and inanimate condition. They stood about in groups — idle, weary, and dreary, until the carriages that were to convey them home were announced.

Thus ended a fête especially devoted to enjoyment. But premeditated pleasures frequently terminate in disappointment: for mirth and glee do not always care to accept a ceremonious invitation; they are friendly, familiar creatures, that love to "drop in;" whereas, bills at long dates upon happiness are very apt to be dishonoured when due.

The pic-nic was now over, and the carriages were announced. Some alteration had been made in the plan of returning home. Miss Callendar and Frank Vavasour had given up

their places with Mrs. Harcourt Evans, in behalf of two timid ladies, who were fearful of trusting themselves to Mr. Vyvyan's coachmanship, especially as he had proposed a short cut home by the seaside. After some discussion, Agnes, accompanied by Vavasour, entered Mr. Vyvyan's phaeton, and commenced their return home.

The twilight had closed in: the earliest star—the star of memory and love, hymned by every poet since the world began—was far in the ark of heaven.

"I fear," said Vavasour, folding his cloak round his companion, "that you will suffer from the evening's dew."

"Oh no," rejoined Agnes, "I have been all my life accustomed to be out in the night air; I shall not suffer."

"Still," continued Vavasour, "I have high authority for my caution; do you remember a conceit ascribed to the great Lord Chesterfield?—

"'The dews of the evening most carefully shun,
They are tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.'"

The distant bells of a church now chimed. "Ah, those evening bells," said Vavasour, "that reminds me of an old promise you made of singing me that beautiful ballad. What time can be more appropriate than now?"

"Gladly will I redeem my word," responded Agnes.

Every sound was hushed, the world seemed left to "darkness and to them," and the music, the voice, the words, the scene were all in delicate harmony with each other.

"Those evening bells, those evening bells,
How many a tale their music tells
Of youth and hope, and that sweet time
When first I heard their soothing chime!"

Agnes was still singing this stanza, when on a sudden the report of a pistol broke the silence of the night. Agnes started, while her companion urged her to make not the slightest noise. They had not gone a hun-

dred yards further, when the springs of the phaeton gave way; and, upon examination, it was found totally impracticable to proceed in it. After some little discussion, the carriage was pulled off the road, and the groom ordered to take one of the horses and make the best of his way to Tredinnick Court, to procure another conveyance. Mr. Vyvyan then led the way, declaring his knowledge of every road throughout the county.

The path selected by him led into a narrow bridle road, descending upon the rough, shingly beach. Every ray of light had now left the dark and heaving expanse of the sea, while the advancing tide rolled threateningly toward the shore. Agnes shivered, and folded her shawl closer around her, as the rain began to descend in torrents.

At this moment, on turning an intervening rock, the sound of suppressed voices attracted their attention, and they involuntarily paused to listen.

"To-night will do for our work. It will soon be pitch dark, and the lieutenant's on a wrong scent. They'll never be up to our game."

Agnes listened breathlessly: she fancied the voice of the speaker was familiar to her.

"We're in luck to-night, that's certain, Mark," replied his comrade. "It's so hazy that the cutter lies out there in the mist snug enough."

At the name of Mark, Agnes's fears increased; and, but for Vavasour's support, she would have fallen to the ground. While considering what she should do—whether to tell Vavasour that he in whose hands her destiny might be, stood before her, and by so doing risk the life of her gallant companion, or trust to circumstances to bring about the capture of the smugglers—a sound of hurrying footsteps was heard along the road down the cliffs, and a number of men belonging to the preventive service rushed hastily past Vavasour and his terrified companion. The

boat at this moment had just touched the shore: in less time than the circumstances can be conveyed in narration, the two smugglers had jumped into it, and the crew were sending her rapidly through the serf, beyond the reach of their disappointed pursuers.

As quickly as Agnes's trepidation would allow, she told her companion her suspicions as to one of the gang being Mark Hindley.

Upon their return to Tredinnick Court, Vavasour lost no time in despatching a messenger to another part of the coast, where the commanding officer of the station had been induced to post a strong force from a false alarm of an intended landing, giving all particulars of the transaction, and offering one hundred pounds reward for the capture of Mark Hindley.

The next day rose in storms. The sky was covered with clouds, flying before the wind in volumes of rolling blackness. The sea raged against the cliffs, as if it menaced their ex-

istence: and the fishermen, who had prepared their barks all along the beach for embarkation at the dawn, were seen on every side drawing them higher on shore, to prevent the mischief which threatened such small craft from the raging of the waters. Some who had been more adventurous, and set forth during the night, notwithstanding the warning elements, met the fate their more prudent comrades averted; and, at the dinner-table at Tredinnick Court, the butler brought the melancholy tidings that the wreck of several boats, among them the one supposed to belong to the smugglers, had been dashed on shore. Such, however, was not the case, as will be seen in the sequel.

No sooner had Hindley sprang from the rocks into the boat, than he gave the order to shove off. "A curse light on these land-sharks!" he muttered. "Give way, men, give way."

Notwithstanding the heavy and dangerous

surf that was beginning to tumble in upon the rocks, the smugglers succeeded in urging their light boat over the waves, and in a few seconds were without the point where danger was most to be apprehended. Hindley had seemingly disregarded the breakers as they passed, but sat sternly eyeing the foam that rolled by them in successive surges, until the boat rose regularly on the long seas, when he turned his looks around the bay in quest of the cutter.

"There, there she lies, more to port; look into the streak of clear sky above the wood there; that long black line is her maintopmast. Pull, my hearties, pull! every thing depends upon our exertions to-night. We must get the cutter under weigh immediately."

In the mean time, the oarsmen were not idle, but by strenuous efforts they forced the boat rapidly through the water, and in a few minutes she ran alongside the cutter.

"In oars!"

The men ceased their efforts at the com-

manding tones of their captain's voice, and he continued, whilst ascending to the gangway—

"Get the cutter under weigh immediately. Heave up at once."

The order was promptly obeyed, and in a very short time the "Blue-eyed Maid" was, falcon-like, flying before the keel-compelling gale.

It has been already stated that there were threatening symptoms in the appearance of the weather to create serious forebodings of evil in the breast of a seaman, and all on board anxiously waited for its fury, for there were none so ignorant or inexperienced as not to know that as yet they only felt the infant effects of the wind.

During this time, the sea was becoming more agitated, and the violence of the wind was gradually increasing. An endless succession of white surges rose above the heavy billows, and the vessel was driven along with tremendous fury by the full powers of the

storm. Still the hardy and experienced mariners who directed her movements held her to the course that was necessary to their preservation, and still Hindley gave forth those orders that turned her in the narrow channel where safety was alone to be found.

"See you yon light on the headland?" said the captain, addressing a veteran seaman at the helm. "Now observe that shadow in the horizon; 'tis a hill far inland. If we keep that light open from the hill, we shall do well; but if not, we shall surely go to pieces. Silence all!"

This warning effectually closed all discourse, and the hardy mariners stood in breathless anxiety awaiting the result. At a short distance ahead of them the whole ocean was a sheet of snowy foam; and the waves, instead of rolling on in regular succession, appeared to be tossing about in mad gambols. It was indeed a dreadful night. The howling of the tempest, mingled with the shrieks of the sea-

fowl, sounded like the dirge of those ill-fated beings who, in the midst of a raging sea, toiled away, often being buried beneath the massive weight of some giant billow which broke over their perilous bark.

Still the cutter held on her way, skimming the ocean like a waterfowl seeking its place of nightly rest, and shooting in towards the land as fearlessly as if the danger of the preceding hour was already forgotten. No shoals or rocks appeared to arrest her course, and we must leave her gliding into a sheltered bay, where the mariners often found a refuge from the dangers of the ocean.

CHAPTER XV.

"I see a column of slow rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood, that skirts the wild;
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal.
The sportive wind blows wide
Their fluttering rags, and shews a tawny skin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim.
Great skill have they in palmestry, and more
To conjure clean away the gold they touch,
Conveying worthless dross into its place;
Loud when they beg, dumb only when they steal."

COWPER.

Among the personages who move and act in the shifting scenes of this our drama, we must not keep in the background an individual whose destiny is closely interwoven with the events which it is our task to record. On leaving America, Mark Hindley, having pre-

viously obtained his discharge from his regiment, had the misfortune to meet on board the ship that was to convey him to England two of his former dissolute comrades, who had been drummed out of the corps, and were working their passage home. The intimacy was renewed, and the voyage was passed in drunkenness and riot.

On landing at Portsmouth, Mark Hindley was easily prevailed upon by his comrades in crime to dispose of the principal part of the property of his late master, Sir Charles Callendar, with the proceeds of which, after living for some weeks a life of reckless extravagance, he retired to some distance from his own native village, where he became a determined poacher.

The next years of his life we shall pass over as briefly as possible, for they were chequered by no incident of any marked interest. It was clear, however, that his reputation for roguery had extended too widely to give him

a chance of remaining in his present neighbourhood with any advantage. He therefore determined to retire to a distant part of the country, and pursue some active employment where he would be perfectly unknown, until, in the course of time, his ill character and practises might be forgotten, and he might again hold up his head as an honest man — a course which his conscience, as well as his natural disposition to good, prompted him to pursue. He therefore proceeded towards the western coast; and, after taking a survey of different places, he secured the lease of a small cottage about eight miles from Penzance. It was a remarkably secluded spot, there being only a few mean huts in the vicinity, and these belonged to fishermen. Having settled himself in this solitary abode, he purchased a small fishing-vessel, and for some time carried on an amusing if not profitable pursuit.

At length he unfortunately got acquainted with a gang of smugglers, and his good reso-

lutions were soon set aside. This lawless occupation he felt would well suit the active and enterprising bias of his mind, and, although he knew that smuggling was condemned by the laws, he was aware that it was encouraged, nay, carried on by those who framed and affected to be the guardians of the laws. True it was that the poor man, when detected in the illegal traffic, was severely visited by those acts of the legislature which are said to be framed for the benefit of society at large; while the titled delinquent, who made smuggling a fashion by patronizing contraband commodities, to the scandal of the statutes, and the ruin of the native tradesman and manufacturer, got off scot-free.

Before Hindley's cottage, the distance of which from the shore was about a quarter of a mile, the coast slightly curved, forming a small bay. At the horn of this, there was a tuft of low, ragged rocks jutting out into the water, which rendered the anchorage near

them so dangerous that no vessels ever sought shelter there, especially as the harbour of Penzance was only a few miles off. Behind these rocks, the cliff rose to a fearful height, bending considerably beyond the perpendicular; and, under the impending brink, a few feet above the shore, was a fissure in the earth that opened into a spacious cavern. A large mass of rock projected its craggy bulk before it, between which and the cavern there was not much more than space for the passage of a man's body. This cavern extended far within the bosom of the cliff; and a passage, at least thirty feet long, and not more than three broad and five high, led to another aperture.

Beelzebub's Mouth, as this place was called, was only visible at ebb-tide; and even then it lay so concealed from general observation as scarcely to be perceptible. The spot was so seldom trodden by human foot, that its security seemed to defy the common chances of

discovery. The entrance, moreover, was so narrow, that, by filling with earth and sea-weed the fissure which formed it, when any thing of value was hidden in the cavern, the probability of detection would be greatly diminished.

For some months the smugglers carried on their hazardous trade without discovery; when, owing to the desertion of one of the gang, their place of hitherto security was made known to the authorities. This came to the knowledge of Hindley, who lost no time in urging his comrades to make their escape. To prevent detection, each determined to take a separate course; and Hindley wandered without any deliberate plan, leaving his future destiny to chance.

On the evening of the second day after their separation, he found himself upon a dreary common; as he advanced, a thick mist enveloped every thing around him with so dense a covering, that he could scarcely

discern any object at a few yards' distance. The heath was of considerable extent, and, though unacquainted with the route, he determined to push forward at all hazards. He had not been long bewildered, when he perceived a light, apparently at a short distance. As this promised shelter for the night, or at least a guide to the next town, he quickened his pace at the sight of it; but the pale, sickly ray seemed to retreat as he advanced, and at length it suddenly disappeared.

Supposing that the light might have been removed by the inmates of some neighbouring cottage, he proceeded onward with cautious celerity, hoping that it would shortly reappear. His expectation, however, was not realized; and he stood in the midst of a wide and barren heath, uncertain which direction to pursue.

While pondering upon the chances of a shelter from the night-air, his attention was attracted by a tall, gigantic figure, which

seemed to emerge from the mist, and advance towards him. He silently awaited its approach. A rough, coarse voice demanded who was there.

"A traveller," replied Mark, "who has lost his way, and would fain get a night's lodging."

"Two miles distant you will find Kempthorpe; ask for the Green Man, at the skirts of the village; there they will take you in. I've too many mouths to provide for, to give a night's lodging or food for the love of humanity."

"I don't seek a favour without a quittance," replied Mark; "provide me a shelter, and I'll pay you handsomely for your kindness."

So saying, Hindley took half-a-crown from his pocket, and placed it upon the rough palm of his companion, who clutched it with an eagerness that proclaimed his love of lucre.

"Follow," said the man, as soon as he had secured the coin within the pocket of a tattered waistcoat—"follow"—and he stalked sturdily, but in silence, before his new guest.

The common here gradually sloped, until at length, upon a sudden, the descent for several yards became extremely steep. As they reached the bottom of this precipitous dell, the moon glimmered more distinctly through the mist which had by this time partially dispersed, and discovered the rude tents of a gipsy's camp. Hindley's host, passing into the principal one, invited him to enter.

The entrance was so low that he was obliged to stoop his head; but a single step brought him within the retreat. He could see nothing; there was not a glimmer of light to guide his footsteps; he stood perplexed. At length, a light was kindled by the stirring of some embers, and the application of a small quantity of gunpowder.

In a few moments there was a feeble blaze,

when the surrounding objects became more visible, and in a short time he was able to examine the persons by whom he was surrounded. He was surprised to find, within this den of poverty, six inmates besides himself and his host. Around the ruddy blaze sat the gipsy's wife and a young girl. Within a recess, formed of canvass, were four children, from the ages of two to twelve years.

The gipsy now demanded his supper in a tone of command, and in a moment the meal was placed before him. It consisted of a piece of broiled meat, to which was added some barley-bread, and a huge flaggon of ale.

Supper being concluded, the gipsy addressed his wife—"This is a traveller who has lost his way, and seeks shelter with the vagrant. Make him welcome, and pick him some clean straw for a bed. He has paid for his night's rest, and must have the best accommodation our tent can afford."

The woman to whom this was addressed

replied not, but, indolently rising from the ground, as if she felt little interest in administering to the comforts of a stranger, took some straw from a bundle upon which she had been previously seated, and presently announced to her husband's guest that his bed was prepared. Hindley, overcome by fatigue, for he had walked thirty miles during the day, threw himself upon the straw, and soon sank into a profound and refreshing repose.

On awaking, he found that the whole family had risen. As the morning advanced, the sun shone out vividly, and Hindley surveyed the different objects within the tent. The gipsy was a sturdy, muscular person, his age about eight and thirty, of a fine but harsh countenance, with black, fierce-looking eyes, round, hardy limbs, and a stature indicating superior strength and activity. The gipsy's wife was a stout, comely woman, with black eyes, in which there was an expression of languor and indifference, save when she was roused to anger.

Of the younger of the dark swarthy imps it is needless to give any description. The eldest of the brood was in her seventeenth year. She wore a loose striped cotton jacket, beneath which depended a scanty petticoat that did not extend below the calf of the leg, leaving exposed to the sight a limb of exquisite symmetry. Her long, glossy hair, which was raven black, hung in wild profusion over her shoulders. She was tall and well formed; her skin was brown, but perfectly clear, her colour brilliant, her teeth regular and of a sparkling white: in short, those who prefer the dark complexion of the daughters of sunnier climes to the blended red and white of our English maidens, would have pronounced Margaret Lee (such was her name) to be perfectly beautiful.

Although her skin was nut-brown, her eyes were of a deep blue, beaming with the lustre of youth and health, and proclaiming, in characters too marked to be misunderstood, that

there was an intellect behind them which only required culture to produce a rich harvest.

Although this young girl was in the constant habit of hearing doctrines and witnessing scenes subversive of all purity, she possessed a natural chastity of thought and feeling which enabled her mind to escape the immorality that existed everywhere around her; and, though she exhibited no outward token of dissent from habits to which she even yet had not become inured, there was ever present with her an inward repugnance to and shrinking from those degrading practises so common in the abodes of destitution and crime.

It may appear incredible that Margaret Lee should have received so little moral infection amid the baleful influence in which she had been born and reared, and that the contagion of example had not corrupted her; but let it be remembered that it is not seldom that Nature uses instruments and methods of vindi-

cating her own power, and establishing her own innate purity, which are the very last that man would have chosen for such a purpose—extracting the most sanative medicines from the vilest weeds, and (as in the case we have just described) throwing around a denizen of the most abject poverty that protecting power which she (to their cost) often withholds from those dwelling amidst the pomps and vanities of the world.

The gipsy, George Lee, whom Hindley had fallen in with, was known in the country by the familiar name of "spring-heeled George," and was strongly suspected of carrying on poaching to a great extent, although hitherto he had contrived to keep clear of the magistrates. Mark, anxious to find a place of present security, after partaking of his breakfast, thus addressed his host:

"Lee, what say you to having me for a companion? I can pay my way; there's my footing," flinging him a sovereign; "and

when we get better acquainted, perhaps I can do more."

"Agreed," replied the other; "but first your solemn oath that you will never reveal to mortal man my name or occupation."

Hindley took the oath, and it was now definitively arranged that he should remain an inmate of the gipsy camp.

Very shortly after his connexion with his new associates, Hindley made a confidant of George Lee to a certain extent, acquainting him with the avocation he had lately adopted. There was something in this very congenial to the feelings of Lee, who was delighted to find that he had acquired in his guest so enterprising a coadjutor.

For several weeks they remained in their present quarters, during which period they were engaged in not a few poaching delinquencies. An event soon occurred, however, which was attended by circumstances that in a great measure changed the prospect of Mark.

One evening, when returning to the gipsy tent, he strolled listlessly along the cliffs, and for some time walked musing onward. On passing a huge rock, his foot slipped; he fell into a frightful chasm, and became immediately insensible.

On recovering his consciousness, he found that he was lying on his low pallet, with Margaret sitting by his side, anxiously gazing upon his countenance, and watching with the deepest interest the return of animation. For several moments, nothing definite recurred to his mind. He had an indistinct recollection of his foot slipping, but his succeeding insensibility was so instantaneous, that he had no clear perception of what had taken place.

Margaret now related to Hindley that, while on her return from a neighbouring town, she discovered him at the foot of the rock, lying, as she supposed, lifeless; that, having alarmed some cottagers, they assisted in bearing him home, when a surgeon was sent for, who, upon

examination, found that, besides other severe injuries, his arm was broken.

For several weeks Mark's sufferings were great; but he bore them with the fortitude that belonged to his resolute character and vigorous constitution. Margaret was his constant attendant. During several days and nights of severe agony, she scarcely ever quitted his bedside. She spent long intervals of time kneeling by his pallet, her fingers on his pulse, counting the rapid vibration: her cool hand alone tempered the burning of his brow; and often, supported by her arm, he slept, while she remained in the same position, immoveable. She watched him with a vigilance that showed how intense an interest she took in his recovery. She anticipated his wants, read his very thoughts, and realized every wish even before it was uttered. Her devotion was such as woman could show only to the man in whom her whole affections were absorbed.

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After the lapse of four anxious weeks, Hindley grew rapidly better, and at evening-tide enjoyed at the open window the thrilling sweetness of the sea breeze. How transporting are the joys of returning health! the calm of mind — the voluptuous languor — the unrebuked abandonment to mere pleasurable sensation—the delight that every natural object imparts — all these fill those hours with a dream-like ecstasy more dear to memory than tumultuous joy.

There is nothing more delightful to the convalescent than to be watched by fond and anxious friends, eager to cheer without fatiguing, to animate without exciting. To be the object of every one's solicitude atones for a time for the loss of liberty and the buoyancy of spirit attendant on health. Yes! there is one happiness still greater—it is that of being watched by one whom you passionately love—watched with all the gentle care, the endearing solicitude, the magic fore-

thought, the love-taught tact of one who adores you!

Thus was Hindley watched, and thus did Margaret watch. Never for a moment was she absent from his side; her ardent spirit was entranced by delight at his recovery.

Margaret's attention to Mark Hindley, during his late illness, had decided the question in his mind as to his future views, and he determined without delay to offer her his hand. The day had been sunny and warm. As the evening closed in, a west wind rose, bringing with it troops of fleecy clouds, golden at sunset, and then dun and grey, veiling with pervious network the many stars. Margaret and Mark watched the heavens. Darkness crept around them, the rocks grew more massy and indistinct—the firefly was alive among the depths of the cliffs—the bat wheeled round their humble dwelling, the owl swept with huge flapping wings out of the copse.

"Margaret!" were the first words that broke the silence, "you have been very kind to me; you have nursed me with a care that no gratitude can ever repay. I hope, I believe I do not mistake the nature of your sentiments towards me. I know my life has hitherto done me no credit. My name has been branded with crime, but with your help, your guidance, I will atone for the past. We will live abroad for some time, until the slur upon my name is brushed away by the hands of time; then we will return and live in our own country upon the fruits of our honest industry."

Margaret did not affect astonishment at this declaration, but readily accepted the only man whom she had really ever loved. It was now arranged that Hindley should immediately repair to Guernsey, to dispose of his vessel, where her uses were better understood among those thrifty islanders than in an English port. On his return, he was to lead the

beautiful Margaret to the altar, and then retire for a time to a foreign land.

Although the mutual affection between Margaret Lee and Hindley seemed to increase rather than to be diminished, as their characters opened more fully on each other, the feelings of each were mingled with some less agreeable ingredients. Margaret felt a secret awe of him, amid all her affection for Hindley. His soul was of a prouder character than those with whom she had hitherto held intercourse.

On the other hand, Hindley saw in Margaret a soft and flexible character, which seemed too susceptible of being moulded to any form by those with whom she lived. He felt that his own temper required a partner of a more independent spirit, who could set sail with him on his course of life, resolved as himself to dare indifferently the storm and the favouring breeze. But Margaret was so beautiful, so devoutly attached to him, of a tem-

per so soft and kind, that she rendered herself even dearer to him as a being who clung to him for protection.

Mark now made preparations for his departure, and, after taking an affectionate leave of his affianced bride, proceeded on his voyage. He reached Guernsey in safety, disposed of his vessel, and immediately returned to England. He wrote to Margaret, apprising her of his intention of going to London, where she was to join him. The arrangement between the lovers now was that they should proceed to Cherbourg the moment after their marriage. Their minds were full of the most delightful anticipations; they saw nothing but bright prospects for the future, which, alas! were never to be realized! Hindley's probation had not yet ceased when he was reminded how uncertain is the tenure of every mortal joy. Shortly after Margaret's arrival in London, she fell ill. Mark never left her bedside. All her medicines were administered by him,

nor for days and nights could he be prevailed upon to take any thing beyond short snatches of repose. Her disorder increased, she had wasted to a mere shadow, her life hung upon a thread: her eyes alone—last retreat of the spirit of life—gleamed brightly amid the human ruin. Her last hour was at hand.

"Mark, farewell," she murmured; "may Heaven bless you! I feel faint," she continued, after a pause, "my voice fails me—bless you!"

Her eyes closed, and a slight convulsive tremor of the lip announced that the spirit had passed from its tabernacle of clay—let us hope to a better world!

At no period of Hindley's life had he been more wretched than he was at this juncture. With the means of happiness in his possession, it had slipped from his grasp, and he was abandoned to utter destitution. He could not rouse himself from the morbid apathy into which continued disappointment had

steeped his soul; he felt like the first wanderer—a creature cut off from human intercourse — with an indelible brand upon his brow, that marked him an object of the world's scorn.

At length his constant mental irritation produced inflammation of the brain; he was cast upon a sick bed, and for a month his life was despaired of. He recovered, however, but with the consciousness that Margaret was no more. Life became a thankless boon —willingly would he have closed his eyes in death to have rejoined her who had latterly been his only link which bound him to life.

From this period, Hindley again became a reckless man, and hearing that some of his old comrades were still carrying on their unlawful traffic on the Cornish coast, he lost no time in joining them. He became the purchaser of a fast sailing cutter, made himself captain of the gang, and had carried on a

prosperous trade for some weeks, when the event recorded in our last chapter put an end, at least for the present, to his perilous enterprise.

CHAPTER XVI.

"'Twas that delightful season when the broom,
Full-flowered, and visible on every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold."

WORDSWORTH.

Our wandering narrative must now return to Tredinnick Court, where, on the day but one following the meeting with the smugglers after the visit to St. Olave's, Vavasour, accompanied by Agnes and Mr. Vyvyan, retraced the steps of their adventure.

How different was the scene from that of the night before! The sea was still in commotion, yet there was nothing to excite terror. The bright sun shone upon its troubled waters, gilding the summit of the waves. The atmosphere, purified by the warfare of the

elements, was fresh and bracing; the smooth water of the cove, in opposition to the roaring billows of the unsheltered ocean; the murmuring of the light waves, their surface occasionally rippled by the eddying breeze as it swept along; the sea-gulls, who but a few hours ago were screaming with dismay as they buffeted against the fury of the gale, now skimming on the waves; the carolling of the smaller birds on every side; all this produced a lightness of heart which the calm of nature alone can create. It was, in truth, a morning of singular loveliness; one of those which have power to steal away the impressions of melancholy from the most afflicted breast, and to pour into the bosom of joy additional peace and delight.

While Mr. Vyvyan was making some researches into the nature of the soil, and indulging in his usual castle-building mania, Vavasour and Miss Callendar were occupied in prosecuting their inquiries respecting the

smugglers. All that they could ascertain was, that the cutter had got under way during the storm, and that a part of a boat, supposed to belong to her, had drifted ashore. This intelligence seemed to confirm their former fears, that the smugglers were lost, and with them every clue to our heroine's destiny.

Two or three weeks of beautiful weather now passed rapidly away, during which the acquaintance between Agnes Callendar and Vavasour grew into that sort of intimacy which meeting in such scenes and circumstances, where tastes are congenial, generally produces. Many a rocky scene was explored together, many boating expeditions were enjoyed; and an excursion of several days' duration to different parts of the coast tended still more than the intercourse at Tredinnick Court to break down the formalities of a not long acquaintanceship.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans was a great promoter of these excursions, and arranged them so

well, and conducted them so skilfully, without any apparent effort or design, that it was impossible to see through the motives that influenced her. Pleasure-hunting, in general the most unsuccessful of chases, and sight-seeing, usually the most tiresome mode of killing time, were fraught with rapture to those who longed only for each other's society, which these parties promoted.

The last week in April brought heavy rains; and heavy rains, with a large party, a rambling country house, a bagatelle board, and a deserted book-room, does more towards the progress of an incipient love affair, than twenty operas, or fifty balls at Almack's. Thus scarcely an hour passed in which Agnes and Vavasour were not thrown together, and he became all but her declared admirer.

Agnes Callendar possessed in the greatest degree that sunlike talent of diffusing light and cheerfulness around her. Vavasour had of late listened to her conversation, her music,

her songs, with increased delight; he had fancied her deep, melodious voice far sweeter and softer than he had ever used to think it; nor could any thing exceed the charms of that conversation which flowed in the easy accents of a pure and natural mind, so as only to render her beauty still more fascinating.

Miss Callendar neglected no opportunities of increasing her store of literature, which Mrs. Harcourt Evans's excellent library afforded her; and these pleasures were greatly enhanced when pursued with one of kindred taste. Vavasour's readiness to recite or to explain difficult passages rendered his companionship in these studies invaluable; and the wild romance of his spirit delighted a character so young and enthusiastic. Upon subjects which interested him, he possessed that flow of natural eloquence which is said to be as powerful even as face, figure, fashion, fame, or fortune, in captivating the female heart.

His remarks, often racy and delightful, and always uttered with the most entire freedom from ceremonious restraint, were the offspring neither of audacious boldness nor impertinent indifference to the opinions of others, but resulted from an unfailing fund of animal spirits, quick perceptions, and strong feelings, ever tempered, however, with the kindest good humour towards all the world, excepting such as, through conviction of their worthlessness, he despised, and then he was colder than marble.

Often, too, Vavasour accompanied Agnes when she required a second in her songs; and what species of intimacy is so irresistible as that formed over a pianoforte and music books, when the songs sung together embody feelings to which the tongue dares not give utterance, and the music serves as an excuse for that familiar interchange of looks and words which otherwise would not have been ventured upon.

Thus Vavasour, who had been at first charmed by the mere appearance of Agnes Callendar, and, as their intercourse advanced, had been captivated by her talent, *naïveté*, and sweetness, at last found himself really in love, though uncertain as to what return he might meet with, and almost diffident of his own success.

It may be supposed that the attraction between Vavasour and his young companion was mutual, and that every day's intercourse disclosed new veins of thought, or feeling, or knowledge. Agnes soon found herself desirous of knowing what Vavasour felt on many subjects which occupied her own thoughts. She soon discovered, too, that *his* ideas called forth her own, and that he could always assist her by the extent and variety of his knowledge.

There is, perhaps, nothing so engaging to some women as the capability in superior men of enjoying their society as rational beings;

and in nothing do the lords of the creation make a greater mistake in regard to the ladies thereof, than in supposing that, in order to please them, it is necessary to lay aside rationality.

Amongst the crowd of Miss Callendar's admirers, we must not omit to mention one whose devotion had assumed a more serious form than the idolatry of most of his brother worshippers, for his views were decidedly matrimonial, and he had resolved to lay his fortune and coronet at her feet. The romantic youth in question was no other than our virtuoso friend, Lord Montressor, whose property being deeply mortgaged, felt that the addition of some hundred and odd thousands would tend materially to rid his estate of the aforesaid incumbrances. Now, as he considered marriage one of the inevitable necessities of his position, and looked upon the young heiress as one in every way qualified to do credit to his choice—young, handsome,

amiable, accomplished, and the fashion — he was anxious to secure, in its most mitigated form, what he deemed a necessary evil. Still the noble fortune-hunter was too cautious to risk his ultimate success by any premature declaration of his sentiments; and for the present he was content to mask, under the semblance of friendship, those advances which he hoped would lead in the sequel to a far more intimate and endearing connexion.

Happily, however, for Miss Callendar, the opportunities of her lordly lover were not so numerous as might have been expected. In a large rambling house, greater solitude may oftener be found than within the walls of a smaller mansion; and Agnes very often contrived to escape Lord Montressor by such devices as the extent of the apartments favoured. Whilst he sought her in the library, she had flown to the music-room; by the time he reached the latter, she had vanished to the conservatory, and so on: so that the evening

probably was half spent before the chase concluded, and Lord Montressor fairly established by her side :—then indeed he was immoveable.

What were the chances of ultimate success to this new adorer, the reader may perhaps divine from what he already knows of the characters of the parties ; but if his penetration be at fault, he must make up his mind to await the regular development of these and sundry other matters, in the course of the narrative we are about to resume.

CHAPTER XVII.

"When we go from each pleasure refined,
Which the sense or the soul can receive,
With no hope in our wand'rings to find
One ray of the sunshine we leave,
An adieu should in utterance die,
Or if written, but faintly appear;
Only heard through the burst of a sigh,
Only read through the blot of a tear."

SPENCER.

Nearly a month had Vavasour thus lived, as it were, in an atmosphere of his own;—his mornings passed in the company of her who was now all the world to him, when he was unexpectedly summoned to London. He had not yet, except by tenderness of tone and the expression of his eyes, indicated to her the state of his feelings. A movement of

doubt and apprehension seemed to check him, at the moment he otherwise felt most inclined to give vent to the passion that influenced his breast. He could not bear the chance, however, of forfeiting the advantages he already possessed, by a premature declaration and possible rejection; he, therefore, fed himself on the usual hopes of a lover, and recalled to memory every word, look, or turn of expression that had proceeded from the idol of his thoughts.

Upon the morning of his departure, he entered a room where often he had encountered Miss Callendar. It was Mrs. Harcourt Evans's morning-room. No one was there; upon the table were some books he had lent Agnes the day before. In the midst of them an ample album superbly bound, containing many extracts from works in print, and some in manuscript, courted notice, by a display of its open, well filled pages.

As an open album seemed free to all the

world, Vavasour without scruple began to read, and found it filled with proofs of the elegant taste of its owner, and the cultivation of a natural and refined mind. On examining further, judge of his delight when his own stanzas met his eye, and also the pathetic lament of the poor prisoner of Fotheringay — which had been canvassed with so much interest on a former occasion.

What sensations, what associations, did not this recall; and what wonder, if his interest was excited, to trace still farther the tone and feelings of Agnes Callendar's mind, as evinced in the different poetical passages which she had thought it worth while thus to collect!

There is in poetry, and particularly in poetry of a melancholy nature, a something that almost insensibly leads the mind to reflection. The coldest heart is not unfrequently moved by its melody, and the bosom that is ill at rest will often slumber to its tones. It

carries us back to those quiet scenes of joy and harmony, among which every individual, even he whose existence has subsequently been a stormy and a troubled one, has, at some time or another, past a few delicious moments. And such was the influence which the charm of poetry never failed to exert over the sensitive feelings of Agnes Callendar.

While Vavasour was "chewing the cud of sweet fancy," the door opened, and a party of idlers entered, headed by Lord Snarlbrook.

"All alone, Vavasour!" said his lordship with a sneer peculiar to himself, "and ruminating over albums and poetry."

Vavasour closed the book he had been reading, and tried to change the conversation, but in vain. Lord Snarlbrook continued.

"What have we here? Annuals — the Book of Beauty—the Keepsake — Heath's Picturesque!—the splendid toys of modern blueism;—a whim borrowed from the French, gilding *their* refined gold, and perfuming *their*

violets until you have made them ridiculous."

"You are severe upon these ephemeral trifles," replied Miss Godalcan; "they form a reflection of the scenes hourly passing around their writers, and are an agreeable addition to our lighter literature."

"In Paris," continued Snarlbrook, "one hears nothing of the Annuals until the auspicious *jour des étrennes*, when they are presented as a *gage d'amour*, or as a *gage d'amitié;* but in England your exotics bloom before November, and are forgotten long before the New Year. But what's here?" continued he, as he turned over the leaves — "an album, by all that's sentimental! Protect me from these refuges for the destitute!—'Stanzas on the last rose!' — 'Lines on an early swallow!' — 'Verses on my birthday!'—'Ode to the moon!' —'Impromptu upon a lovely girl at her devotions!' —'Sonnet to Mary!' They are as puerile as the modern fashionable novels, with

their Lady Georgianas, my Lord Dukes, and Sir Harrys — those caricatures of the *beau monde*, whose vulgarity is only second to that of your fashionable newspapers after a drawing-room, which announce to admiring Europe that Lady Baskerville wore a train of rose-coloured satin, looped with pearls and diamonds; or that some old, withered dowager, who has been morally defunct these fifteen years, appeared in a robe of crimson velvet, giving one the idea that she had risen from the catacombs in the identical velvet that covered her coffin."

"Surely," interposed Vavasour, "such novels as 'Tremaine,' 'Pelham,' 'Granby,' 'Mrs. Armitage,'——"

"An English novel is my aversion," resumed the grumbler; "the *mauvaise odeur* of sour paste is enough to drive one mad!"

"Only fancy," said the youngest Miss Godalcan, who, being an authoress herself, was

anxious to change the conversation, "Miss Withiel has at last married Captain Breck!"

Sundry exclamations followed this announcement.

"I pity any woman that marries," said Snarlbrook. "The wife only becomes a '*meuble de plus*' in the *ménage*."

"You are too bad, Lord Snarlbrook," rejoined Lady Godalcan; "you make out that all the young ladies ought to die old maids."

"I see," persevered the youngest Miss Godalcan, "that the happy pair have left England for Italy."

"Italy!" exclaimed Miss Oswald, sporting forth Byron's exquisite lines—

> "Italia! oh Italia! thou who hast
> The fatal gift of beauty!"

And here followed a rhapsody upon the continent and the delights of being abroad, in which the young ladies all took part. Montressor raved about Italy; Miss Jane Oswald talked of the beauties of the Louvre; Miss

Oswald again quoted Byron. Snarlbrook continued, addressing himself to Lord Montressor.

"If you travellers would only speak candidly, what are the boasted results of your wanderings, which any man is not competent to attain without stirring from his own fireside? Where is the beauty or the philosophy of being 'cabin'd, cribb-confined' on board a steamboat, or being immured with half a dozen fat women and squalling children in a rumbling, dislocating machine called a diligence, full of ladies, who will keep the windows shut and their mouths open; or even travelling *en prince* in your britschka, consigning your purse-strings to the tender mercies of some shark of a courier, who protects you from the rapacity of the minor fry, only that he may more effectually devour you himself; paralysed by damp sheets, and tormented by certain industrious insects, (that would form an excellent exhibition at the Cosmorama,) at

night; poisoned with bad cookery at inns; pillaged by *aubergistes;* rifled by *douaniers;* and pestered about passports by the municipal jacks in office at every *bicoque* of a town you come to?"

During this long *tirade* Vavasour had escaped, and, proceeding to the library, found Agnes alone, the rest of the party having gone to the rectory. She was occupied in drawing, and several of her sketches were on the table before her. Her manner to Vavasour was more cordial than usual; for she felt that the interest he had taken in her welfare was a legitimate reason for showing the pleasure his society had long afforded her. After some slight remarks, she told him that they had that morning heard from Sir Walter, announcing his intention of meeting them on their return to London.

"You will then soon leave Tredinnick?" said Vavasour.

"Yes, we go in ten days, perhaps less."

"Ten days! I am almost selfish enough to wish you were going to-morrow."

"Why?" asked Agnes, smiling.

"Because I am going myself to-day, and I envy you the many beautiful sights you may see in ten days without me."

"Going to-day, Captain Vavasour? How very sudden! I hope nothing has occurred. Mrs. Harcourt Evans will be very much disappointed."

Vavasour's heart beat very quick, but he busied himself with the sketches on the table. There was something in her manner which gave him a pleasure it was difficult to conceal. She spoke of Mrs. Harcourt Evans's disappointment; but a certain tone of her expressive voice betrayed her own also.

At last he contrived to say, with apparent ease: "There is some electioneering business waiting my return; and I find, by a letter from my uncle's agent, that Lord Vavasour is not quite well. This has decided my plans.

The unmingled pleasure I have enjoyed here I never can forget; and if, by devotion to the cause nearest your heart—if, by unwearied exertions in finding a clue to the mystery that hangs over your destiny, I can repay a debt of gratitude to her who has been the source of my happiness, I shall indeed be happy."

Agnes's heart responded to every word he uttered, and she wished to say something, when he took up a sketch she had just been finishing of St. Olave's Abbey.

"How very like this is!" he said, with animation.

"I am glad you think so: pray accept it; the subject may give it some value."

"Most thankfully; I shall value it as one of my most precious possessions. How much it will recall——"

Agnes began to fold up her drawing, and this was scarcely accomplished before Mrs. Harcourt Evans herself appeared. She ex-

pressed the truest concern on hearing of Vavasour's departure.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the gentlemen from the billiard-room and the stables. Luncheon was ready, and the amusements of the day were to be arranged.

Vavasour now took leave of his hospitable hostess and her young *protégée*. A few words of thanks to the former, a kind pressure of the hand of each, a low "Heaven bless you!" and Vavasour was gone.

Agnes turned to the window, and appeared to be gazing intently on the avenue. For the first time in her life she felt oppressed at being alone with her friend. She would have given much to be by herself, or with one less likely to read what was passing in her mind. It was therefore a relief to both when they joined the rest of the party.

A drive—and dinner succeeded, and the evening, to one at least, was joyless.

Vavasour, meanwhile, after leaving Tredinnick, pursued his way slowly towards the lodge, where he was to get into the mail. He went by the river, that he might visit for the last time one of those favourite haunts in which he and Agnes had often lingered together. He sat down by its sparkling waters, and thought of her as the "one alone" to whom he would wish to devote his life.

The sun flickering through the foliage, now in its richest colouring, seemed to make his heart rejoice in its own thoughts. He pondered over every word Agnes had uttered. The words themselves were nothing; but the manner, the look conveyed hope. "Oh! if it were possible to believe," said Vavasour to himself, "that I should be accepted; what rapture in the thought! No: my uncle's prejudice!" He rose abruptly, as if unable to trust his thoughts on this subject, and lost no time in reaching the lodge.

And what were Agnes's feelings at the close

of this day? She felt it quite a luxury to be alone—alone with the moon, which was shining clear and full above her. The air was peculiarly soft and odorous, and the sound of the river came with soothing indistinctness to her ear. She scarcely dared to ask herself, "Wherefore am I sad?" "What a revelation," she mentally exclaimed, "has a few hours made to me of my own feelings!"

There is a respect, a reserve in true love that prompts the bosom in which it is cherished to conceal it from every eye, and to brood over it with a delight enhanced by the consciousness that it is utterly unknown, even to its object. Such was Agnes's devotion, which she fostered in the depth of her heart, while the idol of her affection was unaware of the silent worship he was receiving. Never in the annals of woman's love did more generous devotion, unmixed with any selfish feeling, dwell in a human breast. She had suddenly awakened from a dream of happi-

ness—a happiness which she had never fully acknowledged to herself until it was withdrawn. Her love, however, was yet too young to feel much anxiety about the future.

Ten days were to elapse before she could see Vavasour again. How much may pass in ten days for a person of Agnes's character, and under the circumstances in which she found herself! The morning had risen upon her with a feeling of regret that so short a period remained to be enjoyed at Tredinnick: the night closed upon her with the conviction that an age was yet to be endured.

Meanwhile, one by one, the whole party at Tredinnick Court dropped off. The dinner-table decreased in size day by day; the large, damask drawing-room was deserted first for the library, and latterly for Mrs. Harcourt Evans's *boudoir*. At last, the family party alone remained: the large Indian screens, that

had stood in stately repose beside the sideboards, now unfolded their gilded and grotesque forms, to enclose the little table *en petit couvert.* The butler and his myrmidons were transplanted to the ante-room; and the dumb waiters supplied the place of their equally inaudible predecessors.

Agnes felt the change, and thought of the happy hours that she had passed in Vavasour's society. What a contrast to the present! There is perhaps nothing so desolate and so chilling to the feelings as a large house and empty rooms, when those who gave life and spirit to the scene are removed; and it was this feeling which led Agnes to spend the rest of the days as much alone as good-breeding and kind feeling towards her friend would permit.

The dreadful fortnight of banishment in Cornwall at length expired; and, by the middle of May, Vavasour was again the happiest

of the happy at Agnes's side, verifying the truth of the French maxim, "*Que l'absence, qui affaiblit les petites passions, ne fait qu'augmenter les grandes.*"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"*Sergeant Circuit.* Have you carefully conned those instructions I gave you?

"*Jack.* Yes, sir.

"*Sergeant.* Well, how many points are the great object of practice?

"*Jack.* Two: the first is to put a man into possession of what is his right; the second, to deprive him of what is his right.

"*Sergeant.* To gain the last end, what are the best means to be used?

"*Jack.* Various and many are the legal modes of delay—injunctions, demurrers, sham pleas, writs of error, rejoinders, sur-rejoinders, rebutters, sur-rebutters, replications, exceptions, essoigns, and imparlance."

FOOTE.

We must now introduce our readers to the library of Lord Vavasour's town residence in Portman Square, where, before a large table covered with papers, sat the noble owner. His lordship was about five and forty years of age,

and looked the man he was—astute, sagacious, and intriguing. His small grey eyes were quick to discern the meaning of every smile or frown; craft lurked in the corners of his lips; care and thought had wrinkled his brow; and every line of his marked countenance bespoke knowledge of human nature, wiliness, and artifice.

Self-aggrandizement and love of power alone ruled Lord Vavasour. There was about him a depth, an observation, a mysteriousness, a seeming contradiction, which completely baffled the observation of common minds. Sometimes he was frank and free, and even familiar, at other times reserved and haughty—sometimes kind, affectionate, and encouraging, at other times severe and repulsive—sometimes yielding to entreaty, and seeming to give up his own purpose, at other times stern and unmoved, bent unchangeably on the execution of his designs—sometimes condescending to argue, reasonably to discuss any matter of

difference, at other times overbearing, full of objections, and silencing all discussion by the weight of his personal authority.

In addition to these characteristics, Lord Vavasour had that common propensity of human nature implanted in his heart, and few, I believe, exist without it—the love of money. Alas! like him, how many do we see sacrificing peace, conscience, health — nay, even soul and body—for the love of this paltry lucre! If wealth is the first worldly blessing of life, it is also its bane—all seek it eagerly. Money, like the charmed word in the fairy tale, opens all hearts, robes vice in virtue's semblance, transforms deformity into beauty, vulgarity into refinement.

Some might think Lord Vavasour wavering and unsteady of character; but if unity of purpose, unchangeably pursued through life, can entitle a man to the praise of consistency, he deserved it; for whatever might be his words or his actions, however they might vary

according to time, place, or circumstance, the object was always and for ever the same, namely, to gratify, advance, benefit, aggrandize himself!

The very furniture of Lord Vavasour's library denoted the immensity of business which claimed the owner's attention. Besides the close mahogany presses with brass letters, which were attached to the walls, the different chairs and couches supported a great variety of official boxes, which were appropriated to papers of consequence, and were labelled "Petitions"—"Private Correspondence"—"Unanswered Letters"—"Parliamentary Bills," &c. An immense library-table stood at one end of the room covered with stationery, a copying-machine, and piles of letters regularly docketed. The interminable "Commons' Journals" and Hansard's Debates were arranged on the floor; and his lordship's own writing-table was covered with portfolios, blotting-books, lettered *garde de feuilles*, red tape, paper-

cutters, pen-stands, and all the fopperies of writing. A large basket stood beside his arm-chair to receive loose papers, and the rug was strewed with covers of letters, torn papers, and printed circulars.

Lord Vavasour opened one of the drawers of his secretaire, and, having rang the bell, sat down and took out a packet of papers. The door opened, a servant entered. "Send in Mr. Spiers," said Lord Vavasour, and the man retired.

In a few seconds, another person appeared — a short, bustling-looking man of about forty, habited in black, rather white at the seams. Impudence and cunning were written in very legible characters upon his countenance. But we will leave his character to develop itself.

As Mr. Spiers, of Chancery Lane, attorney-at-law — for such was the individual of whom we now treat — entered the library of Lord Vavasour, he turned round, and carefully closed

the double door, then, advancing towards his patron, made a low bow. His lordship scarcely returned it, for, though with superiors he was the first to bend the knee, he was with inferiors the last to bow the head.

"Take a chair, Mr. Spiers," said Lord Vavasour, without raising his eyes from a paper he was perusing—"take a chair."

Mr. Spiers sat down, and, drawing forth some documents from a blue bag which he had brought with him, began to put them in order, while Lord Vavasour read on. In a few moments, his lordship ceased, and addressed the attorney.

"Now, Mr. Spiers, what news from Alderley?"

"My head clerk, my lord, has not yet returned," replied the lawyer; "but by this day's post——"

"Ay!" interrupted Lord Vavasour; "despite of the new bill, that borough must still remain mine."

And here it may be necessary to say that the vast changes effected in our legislative institutions by the passing of the Reform Bill had just come into operation. The glories of Bletchingly and Milborne Port had faded from our view; the sun of Old Sarum and Gatton had set for ever; and among the less harshly used victims which ministerial justice, tempered with mercy, had consigned to schedule B was the ancient and respectable borough of Alderley, the patronage of which, like that of Ravensbrook, had been, for the space of half a century, most impartially divided between the distinguished families of Hazelwood Court and Vavasour manor. Accordingly, during the whole of that period, every succeeding election had witnessed the peaceful and uncontested return of two senators for each borough, judiciously selected from among the members of these allied houses, each of which nominated the family candidate, without attempting any interference with the appointment of

the other. Thus, during a long succession of parliaments, the politics of Alderley were undisturbed by faction; and there is no saying how long this blissful state of things might have continued, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, had not the much-dreaded bill announced to the trembling electors of Alderley the partial extinction of that ancient and loyal borough.

The present noble patron of the immaculate place in question now began to feel considerable alarm for the permanency of that senatorial dignity which had so long resulted from his being permitted to nominate a member of the Commons' House. At Sir Harcourt Callendar's death, Lord Vavasour had fondly hoped that the next heir, Sir Charles, would take no part in politics; and he was, to use his own expression, moving heaven and earth to counteract his interest, when the calamity we recorded in our first chapter took place. No sooner had that event happened, than his lord-

ship commenced a suit in Chancery, to deprive Agnes of her rights; by which step, if successful, the whole political interest of the two boroughs would be thrown into his hands.

Mr. Spiers proceeded, while Lord Vavasour listened with the deepest attention to the statement of the man of law, although no change of countenance denoted the slightest anxiety. His feelings were so habitually under controul, that they were like the attendant spirits waiting on another Prospero; never obtruding unbidden on their master, yet obedient to his slightest call; and, while ready to assume to others any form he pleased, yet still remaining invisible to mortal ken, except when commanded to promote his revels or aid the "insubstantial pageant." His lordship then commenced a long harangue, in which he indulged in sundry aphorisms, and talked loudly about principles, public duties, &c. &c. &c., though our readers will probably have already discovered that he was not one

of those who think it necessary to wear out their principles in practice.

"There is another subject, my lord, upon which I am anxious to take your lordship's instructions," continued the man of law. "More than half of your lordship's tenants, as I learn, will be backward with their rents this day se'nnight."

Lord Vavasour frowned. "I leave them in your hands," said he, sternly—"Full rents, or you will seize their stock and eject them."

"My lord," exclaimed Mr. Spiers, in a deprecating tone, "we must deal warily with the farmers, if we hope to gain from them the full rents. If my lord approve of my calling a meeting of them forthwith, and addressing them personally, if there be money in their pockets, I think I'll find a way to draw it out."

The lawyer, as he said this, grinned from ear to ear, showing to advantage his large,

crocodile teeth. Vavasour, knowing the influence which Spiers possessed, and believing him shrewd and devoted to his interest, immediately consented to the proposal. Mr. Spiers was rising to depart, but Lord Vavasour begged him to remain, for he had business to treat of more importance than even the question of the rent.

"You know," he said, "that the lands of Sir Walter Callendar border upon my own; that they are well cultivated and finely wooded."

"Beautiful lands, my lord; beautiful."

"I covet the estate. No private gentleman ought to hold an estate so intersected by my domain; and Sir Walter, by some means or other, must be dispossessed of it."

"Suppose your lordship were to make an offer," said Mr. Spiers, leaning his chin thoughtfully upon his hand; "perhaps the baronet might be disposed to sell."

"No — the fellow loves his grounds so

much, that I doubt whether any sum would tempt him to assign his title-deeds over to me."

Mr. Spiers, amidst his reflections, seemed to catch a pleasing idea, and he gave vent to it.

"I hear, my lord, that Sir Walter is much involved; perhaps his estate, house, and all will shortly come to the hammer."

"I hope not," said Lord Vavasour, "for my views would then be thwarted; many candidates, no doubt, there would be for the purchase, and the estate would be sold high. No, I must obtain it at my own price; that and the Haselwood property would secure the county and the two boroughs. We must run Sir Walter in debt, and obtain a mortgage on his estate, whereby eventually it will fall into my possession. I need your assistance, Mr. Spiers; so listen to my plans."

The lawyer, all attention, drew his chair nearer to the table, and held his hand to his

ear, to catch more plainly the low words of Lord Vavasour.

"You are aware, Mr. Spiers, that Sir Walter and myself are not upon friendly terms. Ever since he has lived in the county, it has been his pleasure to thwart all my views and purposes. There is not, perhaps, a prouder man living than he is; and that intolerable pride, added to his insolent sarcasms at the first election, when I contested the county against the Callendar interest, has entirely put an end to all intercourse between us. You will therefore see that he has really no claim upon my forbearance in this business."

"None in the world! none in the world!" exclaimed Spiers. "Indeed, all I wonder at is, that your lordship does not use the power you have to annoy him!"

"No, sir; no!" replied Lord Vavasour, in a strong tone of aristocratical pride. "I never had any wish to annoy him. My only wish has been to lower that pride which is ruinous

to himself and insulting to others; and I should not pursue that wish so far, had not a circumstance happened which has brought us into immediate collision."

Mr. Spiers was about to make a rejoinder, when his lordship waved his hand.

"The simple fact is this, Mr. Spiers; my nephew, Frank Vavasour, with all the wild enthusiasm of youth, has fallen desperately in love with Sir Walter's grand-niece, Miss Callendar."

"Really!" cried Mr. Spiers.

"On Frank's part," continued Lord Vavasour, affecting a tone of candour and moderation — "on Frank's part, it is but a boyish attachment. I love the boy, who, as you know, will succeed me, when it pleases Heaven," he added, piously, "to remove me from this world of care. I love the boy, and do not choose to see him the prey of mean and designing beggars; and I wish not only to punish them for their low and cunning

schemes, but to save my nephew from their snares. Can we not, Mr. Spiers, hit upon some plan by which this may be effected?"

"Why, really, my lord," replied Mr. Spiers, hesitating slightly, for he was totally unprepared for the intelligence he had received, "doubtless—doubtless we may devise some means by which your lordship's heir may be extricated from this little entanglement; but it will, of course, require thought; though, perhaps, some idea may have already suggested itself to your lordship's mind."

"Why, to tell you the truth," replied the noble lord, with a self-satisfied smile, "I have devised a project, upon which I require your legal advise. You are aware that my nephew's fortune amounts only to fifteen thousand pounds. All the rest is in my power. Now attend to me, attend to the proposal I wish you to make him; it is one prompted by the kindest feelings; one that you, Mr. Spiers, will approve of."

A cunning smile illuminated the dry features of the attorney, and, shaking his head with a Burleigh-like pregnancy of meaning, he said—"Ah, my lord."

"Without entering upon further preface, I wish you to see my nephew, Captain Vavasour, and point out to him, that, upon one side, there is a disgraceful passion for an unknown, penniless girl — a passion which holds him in bondage, closes the world against him, and robs him of every advantage; above all, of his uncle's regard. On the other hand, a matrimonial connexion with a lady of fortune, and of most distinguished family, offers itself: one, whose person and manners are unexceptionable. The daughter of my old friend, the Marquis of Roseneath, is a prize in every respect worthy of my nephew's highest ambition."

"The Marquis of Roseneath's daughter!" exclaimed the man of law, with assumed surprise, for he well knew how anxiously his

noble patron, with a view to his own political aggrandizement, sought an alliance with the family of this antiquated piece of nobility.

"Yes! Lady Catherine De Vere," continued his lordship. "If my nephew regards my wishes, he reinstates himself in my good opinion, and regains my lost favour and esteem. Honours, grandeur, dignities, fortune await him. It remains for him to make the choice between wealth and poverty. If you succeed, two hundred pounds are yours."

"Your lordship is ever generous and kind," replied the delighted lawyer, "and I will do my best to carry the matter through."

Mr. Spiers then entered into a long harangue upon the duties of parents and children, which we will in charity spare our readers.

Mr. Spiers was exactly the person to carry out his noble client's wishes. By his lordship's patronage he had been suddenly converted from a pettifogging attorney, notorious for sharp practice, into a "respectable" soli-

citor and conveyancer. In the chicaneries, sophistries, and selfish working of the legal profession, he was perfectly at home; not only could he manage a lawsuit, but he could make one first, and then manage it afterwards; he could set two people by the ears, and then get the case referred to him as mediator. He could not only sit upon a commission of bankruptcy as long as the property lasted, but he could first make the bankruptcy, and then sit on the commission. When business was rather slack, he could husband the little he had; for if he saw matters drawing to an untimely conclusion—that is to say, the suit not lasting as long as the money—he could give an anonymous hint to the opposing attorney; and thus, like Penelope of old,

> "the worke that he all day did make,
> The same at night he did againe unreave;"

and by so doing, kept himself in constant practice: whether he ultimately gained his

cause or not was of very little moment, as the crafty lawyer was always sure to gain his end—which was, to get his bill of costs.

Mr. Spiers saw some heavy clouds gathering in his patron's countenance; and feeling that he was not at all the spirit to "rule the whirlwind and direct the storm," he said a few words about preparing every thing, and quietly slunk away.

Mr. Spiers was a man who, from his rapid elevation from a low to a conspicuous station in society, had, like many before him, suddenly put off the garments of humility, and clothed himself in the purple of pride. He remembered the days of his insignificance—the taunts to which he was forced to listen—the contemptuous regard and haughty manner of the man of power;—and contrasting his present importance with the nullity of the past, he felt that the change was only attributable to his own talents and his own exertions. He had been the tool of others, who now

placed themselves under the protection of his talents. The lofty aristocrat, who had laughed at his misery, now came, with bended knee and mincing look, to entreat his assistance. Such a change as had thus grown over his destiny would have inflated a heart more humble than that of the attorney; and it is not to be wondered that he should repay with interest the scorn and neglect which had so often, whether deserving or otherwise, been shewn to himself.

It was not, however, without hesitation that the man of law consented to take the step proposed by Lord Vavasour, having the natural reluctance to face his nephew which fraud and villany have to encounter honour and probity: but he had great confidence in his own *savoir faire.* His talents were naturally acute, and by no means confined to the line of his profession. His manners were free from legal pedantry, and he had considerable powers both of address and persuasion, joined

to an unshaken effrontery—*oes triplex frontis*—the front of threefold brass, which he attempted to disguise under plainness of manner. Confident, therefore, in himself, he addressed a line to Captain Vavasour, requesting the honour of an interview with him on matters of business, and the appointment was made for the following week.

In the mean time, Lord Vavasour was anxious to prove how liberal he could be to his nephew, and addressed a note to him, begging he would call in Portman Square at his earliest convenience. His lordship rang for his faithful clerk, or private secretary, as he was called, and desired the hopeful youth, who had been brought up in Mr. Spiers' offices, to copy a letter, which his lordship, to avoid compromising himself, even to his confidential agent, directed himself, muttering, at the same time, "This, this will wound her pride; this will put an end to the rash marriage."

The day after the morning Lord Vavasour

had been closeted with his lawyer, his nephew, Frank, was announced. After a most courteous, and apparently friendly greeting, his lordship, pointing to some papers which lay upon the table, informed him, that they contained the necessary documents for the conveyance of Newbold (an outlying estate on the borders of Sussex) to him.

"It is but right," added the peer, "that the heir to my property should, even in my lifetime, possess an independence. This will answer that purpose to a certain degree; and, although the house is of a moderate size, an estate of about eight hundred a year round it will, in addition to your pay and allowance, enable you to make yourself comfortable during the time I may keep you out of the entailed property."

Frank Vavasour expressed the deepest gratitude at this measure, and, after a lengthened conversation, took his leave.

On the following Monday, just as Captain

Vavasour had finished his breakfast, Mr. Spiers was announced. Vavasour met him with a formal distant bow. The honest gentleman, though somewhat abashed by this reception, advanced with assumed confidence, and hoped he did not intrude at too early an hour.

Captain Vavasour, in a very stately manner, observed, that he did not know to what he was to impute the honour of a visit from Mr. Spiers.

"Hem! hem! I took the liberty of waiting upon you, Captain Vavasour, on an affair of some moment—a matter of private business."

"If it can be communicated to my solicitor, Mr. Allworth, of Lincoln's Inn, it will be more agreeable to me."

"I beg pardon, Captain Vavasour," said Spiers, making a not very successful attempt at an easy demeanour, "you are a man of the world; there are some cases in which it is

most prudent for all parties to treat with principals; not that I object to see Mr. Allworth, a most respectable man, excellent firm—Allworth, Gray, and Pulsden."

"Then," replied Vavasour, with a repulsive air, "if Mr. Spiers will take the trouble to state his business in a letter, every attention shall be paid to it."

"Certainly," stammered Spiers; "but there are cases in which a *viva voce* conference—I perceive — I fear — Captain Vavasour has adopted some prejudices which may make my visit appear intrusive; but I submit to his good sense, whether he ought to exclude me from a hearing without knowing the purpose of my visit, or of how much consequence it may be to his future views."

"Sir," said Captain Vavasour, "if you still prefer entering upon the subject with me, instead of my solicitor, I am ready to hear you."

'Understand me, Captain Vavasour, you

could not have a more respectable adviser than Mr. Allworth, or one with whom I, in particular, would more anxiously wish to communicate. But I am sorry, Captain Vavasour, that any prejudice—any idea—any conduct of mine——"

"Mr. Spiers," said the inflexible young sailor, "where no accusation is made, excuses or explanations are unnecessary! Have the goodness to speak to the point, sir, if you please. I am a straightforward man, somewhat impatient of forms and introductions. So pray be explicit."

Thus saying, he drew himself up in his chair, and waited for Mr. Spiers's communication.

"Be pleased to look at this memorandum," said Spiers, putting a paper in which he had condensed Lord Vavasour's views, already known to our readers. Captain Vavasour read it, and returned it.

"This, sir, does not seem to require much

discussion; my uncle knows my sentiments already."

"But, sir,—but, Captain Vavasour," added Spiers, "there is another matter which no one can explain but myself. The young lady—that Lord Vavasour alluded to as a fitting match—surely you will not hesitate—Lady Catherine de Vere is worthy a ducal coronet—though Miss Callendar certainly *has* charms—let me conjure you to pause, to consider the ruin that must surround you, if you do not accede to my noble client's wishes."

Spiers ran on in this manner, thinking he had made a favourable impression on Vavasour, who, putting a strong curb on his temper, resolved to listen with patience. He, therefore, let the wily attorney get to the end of his harangue, and then simply asked him to communicate to his uncle his determination to decline the proposed honour of Lady Catherine's hand.

"Deeply do I lament your decision," said

the somewhat subdued man of law. "But I will urge the question no further. It now only remains for me to express how happy I shall be if ever I can be of any service in bringing this affair to a satisfactory conclusion. I have the honour to wish you a good morning."

This parting speech was so well got up, and had so much the tone of conscious integrity unjustly suspected, that even Captain Vavasour was staggered in his bad opinion. He followed him two or three steps, and took leave of him with more politeness (though still cold and formal) than he had paid during the visit.

Mr. Spiers left the house half pleased with the impression he had made, half mortified with the proud reluctance with which he had been received. "Captain Vavasour might have had more politeness," he said to himself; "it is not every man that can bring a good fortune of five thousand a year to a penniless captain."

The lawyer was no sooner gone than Captain Vavasour addressed a note to his uncle, giving up all claim to the property he had so lately handed over to him; being determined to live upon his own small patrimony rather than be indebted to him for an estate offered under such ungenerous circumstances.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Thou art in London—in that pleasant place,
Where every kind of mischief's daily brewing."

BYRON.

The London season was now in its zenith. Parliament was sitting, and the world, the exclusive world, seemed intoxicated by delicious excitement.

"Through street and square fast flashing chariots hurl'd
Like harness'd meteors;"

from the first universal roar of morning business, to the last solitary cab bearing home to a daylight pillow some drowsy senator, or first season's lingerer of the ball-room. The Opera was adding its aristocratic refinements to the general enjoyment; the Italian night-

ingales were in full song. The club windows in St. James's Street were sporting their full complement of men about town; some occupied with a newspaper—others directing their attention towards the street. Here might be seen a motley group: the heartless man of fashion—the dyspeptic *gourmet*—the broken down gamester—the superficial man of letters—the care-worn official—the worn out *roué!* theatres, *concerts d'été*—German operas—French plays—beguiling the idler from his weariness. These, with a ceaseless succession of *déjeúners*, dinners, balls, concerts, and water parties, proclaimed that the season was in its greatest force.

It was a beautiful morning in the month of June. Young men of fashionable exterior lounged about the steps of Crockford's and the Guards clubs; members of parliament, two and two, might be seen wending their way to Brooks's, while the windows of Boodle's were graced with country gentlemen in green

coats and top boots, discussing the poor and corn-laws.

Here, too, might be seen a well-appointed cab, drawn up at the window of a resplendent *vis-à-vis*, its occupant in close converse with the fair inmate; the horse pawing the ground with impatience, and the duodecimo tiger scarcely able to reach the rein; while, like master like man, some overpaid, overfed, pampered footmen decked out in gaudy liveries from behind the carriage of some antiquated dowager were ogling pedestrian grisettes.

Frank Vavasour, in a frame of mind that will be better understood than described, entered White's, and took his station at the table near the bay window, out of sight, however, of the small coterie congregated therein. Whilst occupied with a newspaper, which he had hastily snatched up, his attention was called to a conversation that was being carried on at that fatal window, where the idlers of fashion pass their lives in blowing

the bubbles of small talk, or where characters are killed by the dozen.

"Who, in Heaven's name, was that beautiful creature to whom Mrs. Harcourt Evans introduced me last night?" inquired Lord Colebrook, a young guardsman, of the Honourable James Galloway, as they lounged together in the window of the most exclusive club in St. James's Street.

"Miss Callendar, spinster, of no parish at all, as Tony Lumpkin says."

"She's a divinity," continued the other. "She dances like a zephyr, sings like an angel, and touches the piano as St. Cecelia would have done if pianos had existed in her time. If I had not been under Quin's orders, who positively forbids hot rooms, I should have staid at Lady Hamilton's until daybreak."

"You're a pretty fellow, Colebrook, to talk of being an invalid, when I saw you last night pitching it strong."

"Nonsense," said the lordling.

"By Jove," continued Galloway, "I booked it for a regular case of smite. However, my good friend, I can tell you that you won't carry on the war long in that quarter. I used to try it on with the Callendar girl, but was obliged to give it up. It did not pay. You'll find her slow—dead slow."

"Slow or not, she's devilish handsome," observed the guardsman. "How much has she?"

"Ten thousand a year, at least," replied Galloway, as he added, *sotto voce*, "and I wish she may get it. But Vavasour is the favourite—I'll back him to win, against Florida winning the cup at Ascot."

"Hang those Vavasours! they are born to good luck. I suppose it's all fixed with Frank—lucky fellow!—I should like to cut him out."

"Cut out Frank Vavasour! it would be much easier to unthrone the Emperor of Russia."

"If you will lay me long odds, I'll do it for fun."

"Done—ten to one—a thousand to a hundred—"

"Done — done!" shouted the young flag-bearer.

"Come, Colebrook, I'll give you a good start; drive me to Kensington Gardens; we shall be sure to run them down there."

"Agreed; agreed;" off they went, and poor Vavasour underwent the martyrdom of hearing the whole conversation. One consolation he had left; Agnes was to be at the Opera on the following evening, and there he determined to caution her against the advances of the young ensign.

Pass we over the time that elapsed between the scene at the club, and eight o'clock of the following evening. The Opera was very brilliant. It was one of the best nights of Malibran's best season. The lovely queen of song, now departed, forgotten, and replaced, was

then in the zenith of her beauty and popularity. The house was crowded with the fair, the rich, the noble, and, to all outward appearance, the happy. Bright eyes beamed from every box on the lower circles; diamonds sparkled on many a lofty brow; "nods, becks, and wreathed smiles," and many a snowy arm attracted the beholder from afar, as it reclined gracefully on the crimson-cushioned parapet.

Survey the house!—a smile is on every face, and plaudits escape from every lip as the full tide of song rolls with the combined beauty of Zingarelli and Malibran; and even the well-bred apathy of fashion gives place to a rapturous burst of momentary enthusiasm. It is a bright, a joyous scene! How unlike the gloomy, care-fraught world!

And yet, could we penetrate this brilliant and polished surface—could we remove the veil, and glide, Asmodeus-like, into the inmost recesses of the mansion—what a world

of care—what a host of passions—what a chaos of feeling would be revealed to our gaze! Amongst those gentler beings, whose features are one uniform aspect of enjoyment, how many a radiant countenance conceals an aching heart! how many a placid brow but serves to mask a throbbing brain! How many a sad tale might we there read of feverish hopes and anxious fears — of clouded prospects, of love unrequited, of affections betrayed!

> "The leafless desert of the mind—
> The waste of feelings unemploy'd!"

But let us turn to the other sex. Could we dive into the dark and troubled abyss of *their* bosoms, what fierce, what selfish, what demonlike passions should we not behold! What envious rancour, what implacable revenge, what feelings of malevolence under the mask of what the world calls friendship! And even where the nobler qualities of man are predominant, where the soul is uncontaminated, and the heart uncorrupted—what *ennui*,

what disappointment, what disgust! In nine out of ten, should we not read of ill-spent youth, of misdirected talents, of blasted hopes, of blighted ambition!

But enough—the spell is broken. Costa appears—flourishes his *maestro's bâton*, and, after a splendid overture, the curtain rises.

Vavasour, who was intensely sensitive to music, hoped to hear the first act of Romeo e Giulietta in peace, before *any one* came. The music would tranquillize him; and never had he stood in greater need of being tranquillized. But scarcely had he taken up his pensive position in the outer circle of the pit, just at that bend of the house where the sound is best, and which commanded a view of *the* private box, than he was joined by the last man he wished to meet—the Tuft-hunter!

"So early, Vavasour? What can bring you here at this preposterous time of night?"

"I wished to see and hear Malibran from the beginning——"

"So did I. Will you stand a little to the right?—thank you;" and Lionel Crouch very adroitly manœuvred himself into Vavasour's place, which commanded the only view of the stage, down an avenue of *Cauchois* head-dresses.

"*Brava! bravissima!* incomparable Maria Felicia!" exclaimed he, with a yawn, when the cavatina was finished. "Are you going to Lady Garston's to-night? Don't be uneasy—you need not strain your neck—*she's* not here yet!"

"You are talking riddles as usual, *Mr.* Crouch."

"As if you had not posted yourself in the very precise angle of observation! Ten minutes later, and your place would have been occupied by James Galloway, or Montressor, or one of the numerous *aspirants*."

"How early every one is to-night!" interrupted Vavasour, anxious to change the conversation. "Is not that Mrs. Fullarton?"

"Yes: when she can't spunge upon her friends for a box, and hires one herself, she is sure to have her money's worth. She is looking this way. *Quelle horreur!* Think of her inserting that barbarous prodigy, a *third* woman, into her box! Ah, there's Mrs. Harcourt Evans and her lovely charge—the divinity, as young Colebrook calls her. See what fierce love the precocious ensign is making."

"Making love!" repeated Vavasour, in a tone of disgust, so emphatic as to excite an audible "*Hush!*" from all the admirers of Malibran in the neighbourhood.

"Excellent!" was Crouch's reply. "If you really had never heard of the affair before, you could not have given a better start. It was worthy of Kean! Brava! brava!"

And then, by that tact, for which he was famous, Crouch gained what he wished, namely, an insight into Vavasour's feelings. It was his purpose to scrutinize closely the degree of intimacy between his companion and

Miss Callendar, that he might report it to his patron, Montressor; partly from envy and malice, partly from idleness, partly from a desire to gain consequence by fathoming secrets which were puzzling the fashionable coteries.

"Shall we go behind the scenes," resumed the Tuft-hunter, when the encore was over, "and compliment the Malibran on her triumph?"

"I cannot go yet," replied Vavasour, colouring slightly; "I shall remain here until the end of the act."

"Until Miss Callendar looks round? Very well; *addio*," was Crouch's indifferent reply.

Vavasour breathed more freely when he was gone. That raillery, so careless, so searching, so worldly, was painful to the greatest degree. It excited his jealousy, yet increased his determination, and proved how intensely alive he was to the power of Agnes's influence over him. But the flow of his thoughts was

presently interrupted by an increase of the crowd in the corner where he stood, and put to flight his gloomy meditations.

Two young men were among the new comers —embryo Brummells—creatures made up of rings, chains, pins, frills, gaudy waistcoats, and canes, curled, mustachioed, and scented, and glowing under the consciousness of their splendid apparel.

"There, that's her — there, in the red wreath — four boxes from the stage — that's the heiress—Miss Callendar. Is she not a dem'd fine girl?"

"I cannot get a look at her," replied the other, arranging a huge double opera-glass. "She's devoting herself to some one in the back of the box."

"Montressor, probably; he's the favoured swain. Crouch declares she has proposed to him, and says it is a case of the hare hunting the hounds."

"Montressor has little chance," continued

the other, "now Colebrook's in the field: twenty thousand a year in a ring fence."

Vavasour, feeling that, if he remained longer, he would be unable to restrain the contemptuous words which rose to his lips, left the place hastily. In another instant he was in a stall that commanded a view of Mrs. Harcourt Evans's box, trembling with feelings it would be difficult to describe.

Agnes was passionately fond of music; and the opera she now heard was one with which she was perfectly familiar, and in the best airs of which she herself excelled. She had often sung them to Frank Vavasour; and, whilst her eyes were riveted on the singers, and the silence of attention hung on her half opening lips, not a turn of the harmony, not an incident of the scene, but seemed to be reflected in her changing colour and speaking countenance.

Vavasour in the mean time was watching every movement that took place in Mrs. Har-

court Evans's box. Lords Montressor and Colebrook were both exerting their best energies to gain the attention of the young *fanatica*, whose whole heart was on the stage.

The widow was in her glory: two rich and devoted swains paying their homages to the charms of her *protégée*.

"I hope," said Lord Colebrook, making a strong effort, "that Miss Callendar will patronize our band to-morrow."

What answer Agnes might have made to the last speech will never be known, for the curtain drew up on the tomb scene in "Romeo," and neither the talkative matchmaker nor the impassioned ensign could any longer refuse their attention to the opera.

Absorbed, excited, throughout the entire scene, forgetting the crowd of which she formed a part, sat Agnes. She could not join in the applause which thundered through the house, nor the deafening shouts with which the syren was called for to receive the raptu-

rous acknowledgments of hundreds of her worshippers. She leaned against the front of the box, lost in admiration; and, seizing the bouquet which lay upon it, threw it, with all her heart of ecstasy, upon the stage.

The ballet having now commenced, Agnes felt her attention released, and, looking round the house, her eyes fell on Frank Vavasour, who, silent and motionless, had stood gazing intently on her for some minutes. She would have again raised her eyes; but, instantaneous as her look had been, he caught it, and returned it with an almost reverential bow. At the same instant, Mrs. Harcourt Evans perceived him, and, touching Agnes with her fan, to point him out to her notice, bowed to him with a gay and gracious smile.

"I thought Captain Vavasour was out of town," said the matchmaker; but, before further comment could be made, the box-door opened, and Frank himself appeared to pay his compliments to the ladies, and to offer his

assistance in conducting them to their carriage, Colebrook having pleaded an engagement to chaperon his sister to a ball.

The only salutation which passed between Frank and Montressor was a silent bow, and an arch expression in the countenance of the latter, which Vavasour scarcely wished to remove, explained as it was by the accompanying action; for the carriage having been announced, Montressor, with no unintelligible glance from Vavasour to Agnes, offered his arm to Mrs. Harcourt Evans, and no alternative was left to her *protégée* but that of accepting Vavasour's arm.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans, fearful of losing her carriage, hurried forward. Vavasour, therefore, had no opportunity of speaking to Agnes; but his looks were sufficiently intelligible; and the changing countenance of Agnes, as he faltered, "Miss Callendar, I have much to say to you," convinced him he was not misunderstood. Vavasour's looks — his

voice — always implied tenfold more than his words expressed. Agnes blushed still deeper for one passing moment, and the next her colour waned. But, turning her dark eyes full on those of Frank, she, in a low but distinct voice, replied, " I am scarcely conscious of what you can have to say, or why you look so reproachfully."

Scarcely had she uttered these words when the sound of "Mrs. Harcourt Evans's carriage stops the way" was heard, and the next moment both ladies had entered it, and were "meteor-like" driven off.

CHAPTER XX.

"We have a trifling foolish banquet towards."
SHAKSPEARE.

For a length of time Crouch had been "badgered and baited" (as the Honourable James Galloway very expressively termed it) by his Crockford friends to "stand a dinner," and, after duly weighing the pros and cons, in which the effect that would be produced by its announcement in the newspapers seemed to give the turn to the scale, finally determined to entertain a "small and select circle."

Our hero's lodgings, as we have already mentioned, were in Clifford Street, a neat second floor, with the use of a drawing-room

occasionally on the first floor. His pride would, perhaps, have revolted from so *elevated* a position, had he not been assured by his landlady that Lord Moorsom of the Guards had occupied the second floor previously, and, which was literally true, his lordship having removed there from the apartment below, in order to have his own rooms new papered and painted.

"*Mais revenons a nos moutons.*" To accommodate his tenant, the landlord, an advertising purveyor, importer, and "composer" of wine, occupied the ground and first floors, the former being converted into an office, in which samples of every sort of wine were ostentatiously displayed. The house itself, however, looked private, the Tuft-hunter having, by dint of recommendations to his numerous aristocratic friends, obtained the consent of Mr. Slojoose (so the wine-merchant was called) to open a side entrance to the office.

No sooner had our hero decided upon giving his grand entertainment, than he sent for Mr. Slojoose, and, after begging for a sample of his very best London particular Madeira, that, to use his own phraseology, had been so often sent to India as to be quite tired of the voyage, opened the proceedings.

"By the way, Mr. Slojoose, a few of my intimate friends, the Duke of Strettrington, Marquis of Rothsay, Earl of Riversdale, and Lord Montressor, have promised to dine with me on the fourteenth, and I think it will be a good opportunity of tasting some of your best wines."

"You may depend, sir, upon the very finest qualities. The drawing-rooms," added Mr. Slojoose, "will, of course, be at your service."

Lionel bowed.

"And it occurs to me, sir," continued the obsequious landlord, "that the ground-floor would make an admirable dining-room for the

occasion. A screen to hide the office desks, and a few yards of paper to cover the advertisements, list of wines, &c., would be all that would be required."

Crouch thought the idea a brilliant one, and it was accordingly agreed upon; and, while Mr. Slojoose set about the necessary alterations, Crouch occupied himself with issuing his cards. With a tact peculiar to himself, the Tuft-hunter looked to the fashionable columns of the Morning Post to see the "arrangement in high life" for the month; and, ascertaining that, on Saturday, the 14th of July, the Archbishop of Canterbury was to keep open house at Lambeth, the speaker was to give his second parliamentary dinner; that the first lord of the treasury had issued cards for a grand ministerial dinner; and that the chancellor of the exchequer was to entertain his supporters in the House of Commons—fixed upon that day, trusting that, by so doing, he could, with impunity, invite some

two or three dozen of his own friends, half of whom at least would be probably previously engaged. He felt sure of some eight or ten right noble guests, and lost no time in having his cards printed, written, and duly delivered.

It turned out as Mr. Crouch had calculated and desired: out of thirty-six invitations, twenty-five sent excuses; but, among the remaining eleven, to Crouch's great delight, he could count upon two marquisses, one earl, four viscounts, three barons, and one right honourable.

In order to give zest to this "feast of reason," Crouch had invited one whose "flow of soul" was proverbial — Mr. Reginald Sparkle — a professed wit and satirist; but whose wit and satire were, for a wonder, blended with an equal amount of good sense and good humour. But his qualities, as well as those of Mr. Crouch's other guests, must be allowed to develop themselves.

No sooner had his invitations been accepted, and the replies ostentatiously arranged in his looking-glass, than Crouch commenced making *provision* for the coming entertainment, every separate portion of which was supplied from the most approved source respectively; which sources we should be "too happy" to notify for the benefit of the uninitiated in matters of such vital moment to the well-being of the dinner-giving world, but for the apprehension that, in so doing, we might be suspected (as our betters in the novel-writing art have been, under similar circumstances) of less patriotic motives than those which really actuate us in all our communications with the "Reading Public."

The eventful day at length arrived; and, at a little after eight o'clock, Clifford Street was enlivened by the arrival of sundry carriages and cabs, all ornamented with coronets and coats of arms — as Mrs. Slojoose remarked— that lady, with a few young friends, having

stationed herself at the dining-room windows, to see the company arrive.

The Tuft-hunter was now in his glory; for, independent of the gratification he received at the pompous announcement of his guests' high-sounding titles, he was proud to see them (thanks to the Speaker's levee) *en grand tenue.* One brilliant star of British growth, two continental, and one Maltese cross, graced his rooms; not to forget, two deputy-lieutenants in uniform, and one noble lord in the full dress of the ancient and honourable *lumber* troop; which society, from his lordship's weight of person and the corresponding (specific) gravity of his mind, was very appropriately selected for him.

Oh! that never-sufficiently-to-be deprecated quarter of an hour before dinner! which upon all occasions is intolerable, and which upon the present was rendered doubly so by the heterogeneous nature of the assemblage.—

Crouch had studied the *quality* of the party, in only one sense of the word.

Reginald Sparkle tried a joke; but the party were not sufficiently "wound up" to appreciate it. "Crouch," said the wit, "I see you've been papering your dining-room—there's a smell of size!—But, never mind, it's a good receipt for enlarging a small room."

"How d'ye mean?" mechanically exclaimed the fidgety host.

"Why, of course," chuckled the punster, "it gives it *size*."

At length the door was opened, and the butler engaged "for this night only" announced that dinner was upon the table. "Shall I show you the way?" said the host, addressing the Marquis of Rothsay. His lordship bowed, and the host bowed "fu' low," like the Laird of Cockpen in Scottish history; the phalanx of nobles following his *tuft*ship, as he retired backwards, bowing himself out, like the Lord Chamberlain on a

court-day, or a theatrical manager on a royal bespeak. The rest of the company followed, reversing Lady Macbeth's well-known saying, and standing to the minutest point upon "the order of their going."

The dining-room justly deserved Mrs. Slojoose's encomiums, for it was most tastefully arranged. A high japan screen hid the counter and office, while two of Lord Montressor's pictures and some borrowed plate from Garrard's ornamented the walls and sideboard.

"Sparkle," said the Amphitrion, taking his seat at the head of the table, "pray act as my vice." The good-humoured wit readily assented. Two huge tureens smoked at each end of the well-appointed table, and the covers were speedily removed. Crouch began expatiating upon the merits of Liverpool turtle, gently hinting that the Liver*puddlians* alone knew the art of dressing it; the plates were presented to our hero; with an air of triumph he commenced the process of helping his aristocratic

guests, when, judge of his horror at perceiving a white, greasy, unsavoury-looking substance, floating suspiciously at the top; and, upon diving for the green fat, discovering certain hard, black-looking things, which proved to be truffles!

The mystery (like the *pâté de foie gras*) was soon dissolved—a consultation of culinary *artistes*, including the kitchen-maid and girl-of-all-work, had realized the Scotch saying, and "spoiled the broth." They had mistaken the jar of turtle from Liverpool for the *pâté de foie gras* from Paris, and boiled up the latter, and served the former cold!

Byron talks of

> "The rage of the vulture, the love of the *turtle*."

Crouch experienced them both at the moment of that fatal discovery: but the former very soon extinguished the latter, and kept the field to itself, till the *bienséances* had time to recover their sway in the manner at least, if not in the temper, of our ruffled Tuft-hunter.

In the mean time, Sparkle, who at once perceived the "untoward event" that had deprived him of his turtle-feast, desired a waiter to bring him the (pseudo) *pâté de foie gras* from the side-table, and, helping himself to a considerable portion, to which he added half a glass of Slojoose's far-famed voyaging madeira, begged it might be "warmed up" with a certain quantity of water, and returned to him as soon as possible. This was accordingly done, and, while the rest of the guests were consoling themselves for the loss of their soup, in devouring a huge turbot, and which, barring the "home-made" sauce, was eatable, the vice-president indulged in a plate of very excellent turtle, which so far opened his heart as to induce him to perpetrate a pun.

"This is a sad failure," said the president, "but accidents will happen, even in the best regulated families."

"True," replied Sparkle, "no one ought to judge a dinner by the *test-u-do*."

A glass of punch followed this little sally, and the party seemed reconciled to their disappointment; especially as the first course now appeared, and Crouch began to vapour about a splendid haunch from Richmond Park, which his friend the ranger had sent him. But here again the Tuft-hunter was doomed to experience the truth of the proverb, touching "the cup and the lip."

The cover at the head of the table was removed, and, instead of finding a haunch, which he had fondly anticipated would have equalled the one described by Goldsmith :—

> "A finer or fatter
> Never ranged in a forest, or smok'd in a platter—"

Crouch perceived a boiled leg of Brobdignag mutton! The guests hearing the word venison breathed by their host, unanimously begged for a little, and were grievously disappointed at finding their demands answered by slices of coarse-grained mutton. Reginald Sparkle, in

a mock heroic style, began to recite the following lines of Churchill's :—

> "The forest haunch, fine, fat, in flavour high,
> Kept to a moment, smokes before my [mind's] eye,
> But smokes in vain."

After a pause, during which the Tuft-hunter looked unutterable things, Sparkle continued :—

> "The turtle of a great and glorious size,
> Worth its own weight in gold; a mighty prize,
> In vain it comes."

"Reginald, a glass of wine," cried Crouch, anxious to drown the subject in a bumper of champagne.

"I shall be delighted," replied the wit, and, as the butler poured out the sparkling liquor, Reginald aside, and *sotto voce*, sang, after the manner of the evergreen Braham, a line of one of his favourite ballads :—

> "The juice of ripe *gooseberries* flows in our glasses."

"Ah! that's *all* WRIGHT!" he continued.

The turtle catastrophe had explained itself: the mutton mystery was not cleared up till the following morning, when it was discovered that two country bumpkin squires, with rural appetites, and who were in the habit of paying two annual visits to the metropolis, had written to the hotel where the haunch was to be dressed, to order a leg of Southdown mutton. They arrived punctually at half-past six, and ordered their dinner to be on table at half-past seven. But unfortunately (for Crouch, at all events) the number of their room was the same as that of our hero's house; and, as the waiter through a tube that was carried into the kitchen ordered dinner for No. 5, the cook "dished up" (we believe that is the expression) the venison for No. 5 in the house, and despatched the mutton to the same number in the street.

There are some who are bold enough to assert, even to this day, that the whole was a piece of malice on the part of the head waiter,

who owed our Tuft-hunting hero a grudge. We, however, "tell the tale as 'twas told to us," leaving the problem to our reader's penetration to solve.

English people get sociable only round a dinner-table. Strangers to each other seem (to those who are weak enough to be in time to witness the miseries of the melancholy twenty minutes before dinner) to be absolute monsters of dullness and stupidity. By half-past eight, however, they generally become endurable — nay, sometimes pleasant. Rely upon it, there is nothing like eating and drinking to bring out the humanities, and there is nothing that gives so much play to English society, high or low, peer or peasant, as the aid of a dinner-table. It gets rid of an awkwardness with which we islanders are, more or less, universally affected; it puts us at our ease; and, however cold and formal the affair may be in the onset, it rarely happens

but that, before the dessert is put down, all is going well.

Such, at all events, was the case on the present occasion. As the bottle circulated after the cloth had been removed, something more like conversation than had hitherto been observed began to make its way. Every one seemed armed to enter the lists of war, politics, or the graver topics of philosophy and science, with any who should first give the word to fall-to.

After a pause, during which the butler handed round the wine, the conversation turned upon politics. But, previous to entering upon this interesting topic, we must make a slight digression, to raise our humble voices against this modern innovation of permitting the butler to remain in the room after the dinner is removed, and which is palliated on the mistaken notion of saving your guests the trouble (we should say pleasure) of filling their glasses. Nothing can exceed the melancholy

restraint which is imposed upon society by this double-refined modern invention.

If there be a moment of the day in which men unbosom themselves, no matter upon what subject, it is in the hour, or even half hour (if custom and fashion so say) after dinner: and, if any thing can annihilate the genial interchange of feeling and sentiment, the confidential avowal of opinions upon men and things, for which the said hour or half hour seems to be the season, it is the presence of a circumambulating white-gloved butler, who derives the only satisfaction which recompenses him for his trouble from listening to the conversation, of which, however discreet he may be in the use of his information, he becomes perfectly master, and which is left completely at his disposal, either for love or money, as the case may be.

The conversation on the present occasion, as we have already hinted, turned upon politics; and, as Crouch had assembled toge-

ther a mixed party, without any regard to their especial tenets, it will easily be imagined that the demon of discord was likely to have a finger in the political pie.

"And so you advocate," said Rothsay, addressing himself to Lord Snarlbrook, "the late boroughmongering system, when seats were bought and sold, and trafficked like bales of goods?"

"A man may buy a seat in parliament," responded his Tory lordship, "without carrying rottenness to the constitution. Many of our greatest patriots and most distinguished statesmen have in former days bought their seats."

"And your lordship would call such men *representatives?*"

"Certainly, a member of the British parliament is not a delegate; when he once enters the Commons House of England, he represents the commons at large, and not a particular county or district. And I confess

that I think a man infinitely more independent, in the fullest sense of the term, who enters the House of Commons as the purchaser of a seat, than one who, to secure his own interests with them, has been playing the courtier and sycophant, and must continue to do so, to please and pamper the passions and prejudices of his constituents."

Rothsay literally groaned, as we trust our readers will, at hearing such sentiments. But Snarlbrook continued :—

"Such a man is a slave to one small faction of the nation, and shackled in his efforts to benefit the whole. If he is sincere in the proffers he makes, and in the gross flatteries he bestows upon them, and which he seldom is, he is fitter for a courtier than the legislator of an extensive empire; if he is acting the hypocrite with them to gain a seat, he is capable of any baseness to turn that seat to his own profit. The man who pays his money for what you radicals call a rotten borough,

may be a rogue; but, at least, he has not proved himself one by previous practice. He may, like the other, hypocritically profess patriotism, to further his own selfish ends; but he has not previously cajoled and cheated his electors, as an earnest of his talent at manœuvring."

This was a "knock-down blow;" for be it known unto all whom it may concern that the Marquis of Rothsay had, a few weeks before, gained the suffrages of the worthy and independent electors of Bribelington, under the very circumstances that had called forth Lord Snarlbrook's sweeping censure.

But although a knock-down blow is a very serious thing, and may occasion a temporary suspension of sport to the fashionable amateurs congregated upon certain fancy occasions, it by no means follows that the sport is thereby spoiled, or the entertainment closed. Those of my readers whose unpolished education has precluded them from scenes that would have

been duly appreciated by those masters of civil life, the Romans, in the most polished period of their history, may derive some comfort from the assurance that, generally speaking, the breath-expelling blow, in this circensian game, operates only as an incitement to fresh activity, and new efforts to return the compliment on the adversary. It is perfectly true that the increased action of the irritable nerves, when Nature has replenished her patient (or, in the language of the fancy, when the bottle-holder has duly primed him), is not always accompanied with a proportionate share of skill and judgment, and that blows hit at random sometimes fail to take effect upon the part intended.

The above was pretty much the case in the instance before us. The blow of Lord Snarlbrook took effect upon a very sensitive part of Lord Rothsay's constitution, and, calling up blood enough in his face to supply a plethoric habit of body with the means of instantaneous

strangulation, his breath seemed as effectually stopped as if the words had been anticipated by a blow, *secundum artem.* In like manner he was, for some seconds, without the ability to return it; but when he did "lash out right and left," he produced such an effect, as to bring down a torrent of invective from the Tory lord. To carry on our metaphor, Rothsay continued "sparring cautiously;" upon which Snarlbrook flew into a new rage, and expended at least five and twenty shillings'-worth of gentlemanlike oaths, in confirmation of his resolution not to retract his opinions.

Reginald Sparkle here tried to give a jocose turn to the conversation, by repeating a story, of which Joe Miller might justly claim the paternity, respecting a certain aspirant to parliamentary honours, who canvassed a certain borough, where it was notorious that money was at least as efficacious as principle in securing the "sweet voices" of the independent burgesses. The contest threatened to be a severe

one, and the would-be senator was forced to be liberal accordingly. Hearing that a barber had a vote, he waited upon him, requiring to be shaved, and rewarded the tonsor by a guerdon of ten pounds. The rival candidate also heard of the barber, presented himself to be shaved, and handed to the lucky operator a remuneration of twenty pounds. On the day of election, the political Figaro, deeming that a remuneration of twenty pounds had stronger claims on his gratitude than one of ten pounds, voted accordingly. "How!" exclaimed the disappointed candidate, with mingled vexation and surprise, "did you not shave me on Tuesday last?" — "Yes, sir," replied the barber, coolly; "but I shaved Mr. S. closer!"

"There's a specimen of a *Whig* (wig) barber for you!" exclaimed Sparkle, as he finished the story, which he told in his own peculiar way, and which, as usual, "set the table in a roar." "But stop," continued the wit; "the barber ought to be immortalized in song," and

forthwith he commenced an extempore chant, called "Close shaving, or the *barberous* Boroughmongers," in which he even out-sparkled Sparkle, giving an historical account of the fraternity from *the* first tonsor down to the hero of his anecdote. The song convulsed its hearers, not excepting Lord Rothsay, and left him the alternative of joining in the laugh against himself, or putting it to the issue of life and death. As the harmony of the party was no longer disturbed by any symptom indicative of the latter, we are at liberty to presume that he adopted the former, although it must be confessed the muscular contortions of his visage partook more of the Sardonic than of the fresh-faced, shining divinity, whom the Thessalians hailed as the patron of good fellowship and fun.

Reginald Sparkle, who was the best-natured fellow in the world, diverted the attention of the late belligerent parties; song, jest, and

repartee flowed alternately. Of him it might be truly said—

> "A merrier man,
> Within the limit of becoming mirth,
> I never spent an hour's talk withal:
> His eye begets occasion for his wit;
> For every object that the one doth catch
> The other turns to a mirth-moving jest."

During this temporary cessation of hostilities — which in social divisions as well as in its more technical application is but another phrase for want of ammunition or resources on both sides — Lord Courtall, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, and who was in the habit of recommending himself by flattering those who afforded him a seat at their table, seized the occasion to make a remark upon a picture which hung opposite to him, and which the host had borrowed from his friend Montressor for the occasion.

"A very fine Guido that, Mr. Crouch," shading his eyes with his hands; "there is a touch, an expression, a finish, a tone about that

fascinating artist, which leaves all competition at a distance!"

"Unquestionably!" cried Snarlbrook, gravely, still smarting under the Marquis of Rothsay's lash. "There's no imitating him: he may be truly called inimitable."

"Not quite!" grunted Courtall; "I flatter myself I know a little of these matters."

"Yes — a little," drily responded his lordship.

"You're a wag, Lord Snarlbrook," cried Courtall, with a smile of complacency, intended to ward off his strictures; "you cannot, however, divert my attention from that exquisite work," continued he, with an air of enthusiasm.

"It is only a copy," exclaimed Snarlbrook, with a significant toss of his head.

"Only a copy!" cried the offended connoisseur; and, again hollowing his hands to contract the light round his eye, continued, "it's an original; quite impossible to mistake it."

"I'll bet you a *rouleau*," resumed Snarlbrook, "that it is not an original."

"I never bet; it's an Englishman's argument. You propose playing for money, I for character."

"It is natural we should play for what we are most in need of," retorted the noble lord.

"I don't understand you, my lord," cried Courtall, fiercely.

"I have the advantage of you, then," answered Snarlbrook, "and therefore advise you to save your *money*, at least."

Here Sparkle and the host interfered, and with some difficulty succeeded in restoring harmony.

In the mean time, some of the most dignified of the guests had retired; and quiet having at length been obtained, the health of the host had been washed down by bumpers of claret, and the speech of some of the party was beginning to acquire a rather indistinct articulation, when Sparkle rose, and com-

menced an oration upon the merits and advantages of punch, and the propriety and necessity of its immediate introduction.

"Bravo! bravo!" bellowed all the hearers, or rather the speakers, for hearers there were now none; and Sparkle concluded by ringing the bell, and requesting the butler to bring immediately all the ingredients for making that most carefully-to-be-avoided and destructive beverage commonly known by the name of Champagne punch.

These were speedily brought; and what the wit did *not* put in the bowl, it would be difficult to say, but certainly the company beheld oceans of arrack, green tea, brandy, rum, wending their way to the more sparkling liquid, which, with many an addition, were with much care mingled together.

Then commenced loud calls for a song, followed by orders for a grill; both of which, and both equally piquant, appeared in due season. Then came more singing and more

grill, and it was very clear that the scene was drawing to its climax.

But the evening was not to pass over without its grand annoyance. Hoaxing now ensued, from which even practical jokes were not excluded; and some whispers towards the end of the table at which Sparkle presided shewed there was some mischief brewing, the cause and effect of which we shall lay before our readers. It has already been stated that a screen had been placed to conceal the counter and office of the temporary banqueting-hall. Behind this screen Sparkle saw, or fancied he saw, a female head occasionally peering forth. Anxious to revive the celebrated screen scene in a modern School for Scandal, he commenced sundry remarks upon the beauty of Mrs. Slojoose, adding certain innuendoes as to her attentions to her lodger. A slight tittering followed, and Sparkle continued—

"It is really too bad, Crouch, to give your respected wine purveyor so much cause for

uneasiness; the world thinks you a regular Joseph, and yet——"

"Really, Sparkle, my dear fellow, you're too bad," responded the delighted Tuft-hunter. "I own there was a time when I might have paid her a little attention; but between you and I, she's gone off, rouges, and I rather think wears false curls."

No sooner had this sentiment been uttered, than there was a commotion behind the screen; a female's voice was heard crying, "Oh, the wretch! rouge and false curls!" and before the astonished company could ascertain the cause of this panic, the screen fell down, and discovered Mrs. and Miss Slojoose and their two young female friends in a state which, not being either Boz or Cruikshank, we shall not attempt to depict in detail: suffice it to say that, after certain ebullitions of grief, anger, sobs, and reproaches, the females departed, leaving the coast clear; and then a scene came to view that almost made the Tuft-hunter's

hair stand on end. The walls were covered with placards of Slojoose Brothers Wine and Spirit Establishment.

As every "genteel" street, and not a few ungenteel ones, teem with this species of literary composition, we shall not intrude any specimen of them on our readers; but what followed the exposure may be not unworthy their attention, considering that it may be shrewdly suspected whether the truth that lurked under our friend Sparkle's extempore *jeu d'esprit* did not more than make up for its want of wit. On the *dénouement* of the screen scene taking place, he rushed to the little desk that had hitherto lain *perdu*, seized a MS. paper that lay upon it, started, exclaimed, "What on earth have we here?" and then read (or seemed to read) as follows:

"*To make Port Wine.*

"Four gallons cider.

"Two quarts juice of red beetroot.

"Two quarts of brandy.

"Four ounces of logwood.

"Quarter of a pound Rhatang root, bruised."

"*To improve ardent spirits.*

"Oil of vitriol, oil of cassia.

"Oil of turpentine, oil of carraways.

"Oil of juniper, oil of almonds.

"Sulphuric æther, extract of capsicums, extract of orris root, extract angelica root, English saffron, spirits of sweet nitre, aqua ammonia, cherry, laurel water, and terra japonica."

"*Malt Liquors.*

"Opium, henbane, coculus indicus, Bohemian rosemary, supply the place of alcohol.

"Aloes, cassia, gentian, sweet-scented flag, wormwood, horehound, and bitter oranges, fulfil the place of hops.

"Liquorice, treacle, and mucilage of flox-seed, stand for attenuated malt.

"Sugar, capsicum, ginger, and cinnamon, afford the pungency of carbonic acid, and preparations of fish procure transparency.

"Alum and copperas, ground to a fine powder, produce the heading or froth."

The host could support this no longer, and, calling for the carriages and cabs of his remaining guests, he hurried them off, muttering "curses, not loud but deep," on the numerous *contre-temps* that had occurred during this (to him) ever-to-be-remembered evening.

CHAPTER XXI.

"My love, thou surely knew'st before,
It ne'er was less, nor can be more."

BYRON.

Blind as the passion of love is said to make its votaries, Vavasour saw plainly that there were obstacles to the connexion he now seriously meditated, which he feared would, in his uncle's eyes, prove insurmountable. It was not only from the objections he had already raised that Vavasour drew this conclusion, but from his general knowledge of the immense importance his uncle attached to illustrious lineage, and partly from the tone which he assumed with regard to Sir Walter

and his niece, whenever their names were accidentally mentioned.

Vavasour well knew that his uncle's pride and revenge against the Callendar family would sooner see him die than permit him to marry a daughter of their house. To acknowledge his sentiments for Agnes to Lord Vavasour was, therefore, only to call down his malediction on their object; and, under these circumstances, to reveal more of them to herself than his surprised heart had already betrayed, seemed to him a base sacrifice to his own immediate gratification at the expense of his honour and her future happiness.

Vavasour was not so ill read in female character as to be ignorant that he had made an impression on the heart of this artless child of nature. Could he, then, knowing that the bar was insuperable between him and her — could he act the treacherous part of endeavouring to increase an affection that, at least

for the present, must be hopeless: and make so ungrateful a return to the hospitality and kindness of her uncle as to devote the youth of his beloved niece to tears and disappointment?

In the mean time, days quickly followed upon each other. Vavasour became more and more a prey to all those varied and mixed feelings of hope and despondency which few that really love can escape. Scarcely a day passed without bringing him to Agnes's side; yet there was a reserve in her manner which made him guard the secret of his heart, and which cast a gloom over his prospects. But we will not weary the reader by dwelling upon the fluctuations of Frank Vavasour's feelings between hopes and fears, each of which held alternate sway. At times he fondly flattered himself that he would gain his uncle's consent, previous to opening his heart to Agnes. Then he would deem the moment actually arrived for declaring to her how long, how devotedly he had loved her —

how unchanged his love was—how unchangeable! Then again a remembrance of his uncle's communication through his lawyer flashed across his mind, and scared the words from his lips.

At length suspense became so insupportable, that he determined to seek an interview with his uncle, and unfold his heart to him. Accordingly, he addressed a few lines to Lord Vavasour, asking for an interview. The answer, though formal, readily assented to Vavasour's proposal, and the following morning was named for the meeting.

"It is only my uncle and guardian I seek to speak with," said Frank Vavasour to himself, as he walked slowly along the passage in the direction of Lord Vavasour's library. "Why should my heart sink so within me?"

Before the self-suggested answer could come, Frank entered the room, and stood opposite that guardian. When alone in his presence, Frank had never been able com-

pletely to divest himself of a certain degree of uneasiness, which, as long as he was a child, had better merited the name of fear. He now found himself before Lord Vavasour, for the purpose of conversing upon a matter that was important to his future life; and though he knew that the proposal he was about to make would be in the utmost degree objectionable to his uncle, yet the consciousness that he himself was about to ask nothing that was unjust or unreasonable, animated him with the coolest resolution the very moment they met.

Lord Vavasour heard the door open, and immediately raised his eyes from off a paper, which he was in the act of reading.

"Shall I disturb you, uncle," said Frank, "if I crave a few moments' conversation?"

The brows of him he addressed were instantly relaxed, and an expression of benevolence succeeded the gathering frown which had been purposely mastered.

"No, Frank," replied Lord Vavasour, extending his hand, "I am always at your service;" and opening a despatch-box, he placed the paper he had been scanning in it, and closed the box. Frank Vavasour began the conversation.

"I am conscious," he said, with marked earnestness, "of betraying some embarrassment; let it not injure my cause, I beseech you."

"As yet," interrupted his Lordship, calmly, "you have not even hinted at the purport of this conversation; but proceed."

"That which I would say," answered Frank, "is soon spoken. Upon one word of yours, uncle, my whole happiness depends, and that one word I have come to ask ——."

Lord Vavasour, with well-acted astonishment, interrupted him. "It is strange, Frank, that you should doubt your uncle's ready inclination to contribute to his nephew's happiness."

Without weighing this specious answer, Frank continued; "Nor do I." The consciousness of a just purpose, the energy of an overwhelming passion, at that moment, casting to the ground every obstacle that he had previously pictured to himself, he quickly added, "No such idea ever entered my mind, and it is the full belief that you have my interest at heart that has encouraged me to seek you; one word of yours can award me happiness, or blight it for ever."

For a few moments Frank remained silent, in the desire of hearing from his uncle some remark that might assist the avowal he was about to make: but Lord Vavasour was resolved to affect surprise at what he knew too well.

"I stand in your presence, uncle," exclaimed Frank, unable to endure any longer suspense, "to ask your consent to my marriage."

"Frank," replied his uncle, with the

sweetest of smiles, "a son of my brother's, the heir to the Vavasour name and property, I am well assured, can seek no alliance unbecoming his name and station. The matter, then, can need but small discussion. I am not one, my dear boy, either to force inclination, or to influence choice."

"Thank you, thank you," cried Frank, for the cutting words escaped him as his fancy called up Agnes in all her loveliness; "did you only know her as I know her, I could not doubt your ready acquiescence, for her mind is even more beautiful than her person."

"You speak in raptures," replied Lord Vavasour, in a tone of sarcasm; "her name is ——."

Lord Vavasour paused: a cold, creeping sensation passed through every vein, as Frank muttered—"Her name is Callendar."

"Callendar!" said his lordship, his lip quivering with anger. "Beware, nephew, how

you confirm a report, which certainly reached me some time ago, but which hitherto I have treated as idle, and received as utterly without foundation. I charge you never again to mention that name to me."

"It is impossible," cried Frank.

"Frank Vavasour," ejaculated his lordship, "name not her, who never, whilst I breathe, shall marry a relation of mine. "Never!" he repeated, clenching his hand, "never!"

"I beseech you, uncle, take not every hope away ——."

"Hold, sir!" exclaimed the enraged guardian, interrupting his nephew's speech; "wife you shall never call Miss Callendar! This plot has been well laid—marvellously well laid—I can trace the cunning of which you are the ready dupe: but, with my consent, you never marry Miss Callendar; or the moment that sees this baseborn brat your wife makes you a beggar."

"Baseborn!" echoed Frank, heedless of every threat, and his voice choking with passion; "no, she cannot deserve the cruel term; a mystery hangs over her birth; but, surely, there may be traced—in every look—in every thought—in every word and act, a high and noble origin. I dare," he continued, in a still bolder tone, "I dare and will affirm that no stigma rests upon her mother's name."

Every accent of Frank's voice, as it rose higher, seemed to strike some jarring chord within the breast of his enraged guardian. His mouth quivered, his lip became white and curled, as in a tone of irony, he said,

"Pray say no more—say no more; I am already sufficiently convinced how obstinately you are bent on opposing my views for your good—of rejecting whatever I advise. I know you well, sir, and how you have ever disregarded my counsels; but henceforth I will have done with you."

Absorbed by the most painful images, Frank Vavasour remained silent, while Lord Vavasour, with a proud, indignant, lowering aspect, paced the room with hasty strides; till, abruptly stopping before his unhappy nephew, and fixing his enraged and penetrating eyes upon him, a torrent of invective seemed ready to burst from his quivering lips; but again averting his gaze, and turning suddenly away, whilst measuring his steps, the violence of his rage burst inward; finding rent in terms deep smothered and incohehent. At length he spoke.

"Frank Vavasour, am I not your guardian, your nearest relative, your father's brother? By what authority do you disobey my wishes?"

He turned to leave the room, but the voice of his nephew arrested him: "Lord Vavasour," cried he, "when you counsel me as becomes my father's brother, I will ever cheerfully obey your wishes."

The flush of agitation was still on Vavasour's cheek, though his manner was composed, while his noble relative's face was pale with rage. "Would to Heaven," pursued the former, "that I had never known Agnes!"

"Rather," cried Lord Vavasour, unable any longer to curb his indignation—for, as his nephew pronounced the hated name of Agnes in a tone of kindness, the idea that he wavered came to madden him—"rather would I say, would to Heaven you had penetrated the manœuvres, the cunning, the schemes, and specious words of an artful woman!"

"How?" cried Frank Vavasour, starting.

"Are you so wilfully blind?" continued Lord Vavasour. "Will you persist in closing your eyes to facts that are as glaring as the noon-day sun?"

"Indeed! indeed! uncle, you do Miss Callendar wrong."

"Pshaw!" again interrupted Lord Vavasour; "I know her plausible excuse; but will you be the ready dupe of such artifice?"

"You greatly wrong her," said Frank.

"Do I?" replied Lord Vavasour, in a tone of bitter raillery; "I wrong her?—poor innocent!"

The strong emphasis, the galling irony, which marked the epithet applied to Agnes, did not escape Frank Vavasour; the blood mounted to his cheek, and roused far different sensations from those intended.

"Captain Vavasour," pursued the unrelenting nobleman, "though from childhood the Callendars have been hateful to me, I have restrained myself to silence; but," he added, with still more warmth, "when I see your generous nature clinging to one whose solicitude you believe unselfish—when I find you sacrificing all for one who is the offspring of guilt and shame . . . ."

"Believe it not, Lord Vavasour; it is false."

"I thank you," retorted his lordship; "you are at least courteous in your manner of replying."

"Forgive me, if I spoke warmly; I scarcely know what I said."

"I thought as much," replied his lordship, with a sarcastic sneer; "but go, sir — go to the favourite who holds you thus in bondage — to her whose disgraceful chains you prefer to an honourable alliance that I had in view for you, one calculated to procure you riches and rank, the favour of your uncle, and the consideration in the world. But, leave me, sir," said he, in contemptuous tones; "you are unworthy of the name you bear. Go to this mysterious object, whose amorous dalliance alone is suited to a mind grovelling as yours."

No longer able to contain himself, Frank burst forth with a vehemence of feeling he

found it impossible to suppress. That such debasing language should be applied to the object of his love fired him with indignation, and he vindicated her with all the warmth due to her injured innocence; while at the same time, Lord Vavasour's eyes flashed fire, and, with a voice almost choked with passion, he exclaimed, "Leave me, sir, leave my house," and, denouncing a heavy imprecation, he flung open an opposite door, closed it with violence, and disappeared.

For some moments, Frank Vavasour remained motionless, until roused by the entrance of a servant; he hastily left the house, inwardly resolving never more to enter it.

Overwhelmed by the result of the interview with his uncle, Frank Vavasour hurried through the streets, scarcely conscious of the direction he was taking, and uncertain whither he should go. The first thought that presented itself was that of seeking Miss Callendar. Nevertheless, until he could in some

degree hide the too visible agitation under which he laboured, he felt himself to be no fit companion for her. While meditating upon the unfortunate conference he had just held with his uncle, he bitterly recalled to mind the severity of his conduct towards him, experienced from the earliest youth, and to which he attributed that extreme embarrassment which usually overwhelmed him when in his presence. He reflected also upon his own forbearance, which he had hitherto invariably exercised in spite of his natural impetuosity; and felt surprised that his habitual respect and awe of his uncle should have been overcome in this last interview. He was, however, far from regretting the circumstance, as he had now asserted for the first time his own independence.

Such were the reflections that presented themselves but too naturally to Vavasour's mind on the occasion, and served very effectually to check the rising hopes which a few

days before he had almost ventured to indulge in. Despondency, however, was a state of feeling very little consonant to his disposition; and, after a great deal of very unprofitable reasoning with himself, he came to the conclusion that matters were by no means worse than heretofore with regard to Agnes. He felt that the adventitious circumstance of wealth would not raise him in her estimation; that she would value him for what he was, rather than for what he had.

"Every thing in this world," say the optimists, "has its bright side;" and, although it may sometimes require extraordinary perspicuity, or a very powerful *reflecting* telescope, to discover the luminous phenomena in question, the principle is a good one, and in itself worth a whole volume of exhortation on the duties of a philosopher. At least, so Vavasour thought, and for a time he acted upon his impression.

Deferential as Frank Vavasour's feelings

had ever been towards his uncle, he had a much greater consciousness of independence upon all matters of consequence than he supposed, and the undoubted and unquestionable power of acting for himself often rose upon his mind, to console him for the mortifications his uncle's haughty nature now made him endure. Lord Vavasour had, as it has already been shown, great and comprehensive faculties; but his power of reading the human heart was but limited, or he would not have overlooked the fact that every word of his which betrayed a want of respect and consideration, either for Agnes or her guardian, roused for their protection a feeling of manly firmness within the bosom of Frank Vavasour, more certainly hostile to his wishes than the utmost vehemence of passion could have been.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Then along the floor,
Chalk mimics painting; then festoons are twirl'd;
Then roll the brazen thunders of the door,
Which opens to the thousand happy few,
An earthly paradise of 'or molu.'"

"There stands the noble hostess, nor shall sink
With the three thousandth curtsy."

"Saloon, room, hall, o'erflow beyond their brink,
And long the latest of arrivals halts,
'Midst royal dukes and dames condemn'd to climb,
And gain an inch of staircase at a time."

BYRON.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans's long talked of and duly announced ball was about to take place, and Vavasour fondly hoped that it might furnish him with a good opportunity of unburdening his heart to Miss Callendar. The

glare of torches, the mass of moving lights, flitting and glittering in all directions, the noise, tumult, and confusion in the immediate avenues to the house, the trampling and pawing of horses, the oaths, ribaldry, and contentions for precedence, the cuttings and slashings of rival coachmen, for the honour of their respective masters, without a thought of any minor consideration for their horses and panels, the vociferations of police constables, the shouts of link boys, the brilliant appearance of the house, and the exhilarating strains of Weippert wafted lightly on the breeze, through the canvass awnings that enclosed the windows of Mrs. Harcourt Evans's house in Grosvenor Street — all these proclaimed an assembly of the highest *ton*.

The chimes of a neighbouring church had struck midnight; and at that "witching time," when the quiet and well-behaved part of the community are enjoying their first sleep, the more refined classes very rationally conclude

that it is the hour for commencing their evening's revelry.

Hundreds were being ushered through a double file of the gorgeously liveried servants who lined the entrance halls, their names being transmitted through the regular number of heralds, up the magnificent staircase to the door of the reception-room, where stood or sat Mrs. Harcourt Evans, radiant in rouge, diamonds, and satin, and greeting the arrival of her guests with engaging cordiality or dignified condescension.

The ball-room presented a scene of the most brilliant and animated character; a blaze of light and jewels, acres of satin and velvet, a forest of plumes, and, above all, a galaxy of beauty.

"Agnes, I do believe you have not danced a step to-night," said Mrs. Harcourt Evans, as, late in the evening, that is, about one in the morning, she found her still sitting with Lady de Vere.

"Even so, my dear Mrs. Harcourt," said Agnes, smiling faintly.

"But how is it that I have not seen any thing of Captain Vavasour to-night? Is he gone?"

"He has not been here at all," answered Agnes, with as much indifference of manner as she could assume.

"Indeed. Oh, then, my dear Agnes, I understand why you have not danced."

Miss Callendar did not think it necessary to make any reply to this insinuation; and she had fortunately the excuse by the arrival of a new guest.

"You are very late, Mr. Lumley," said the widow to the *nouveau venu*.

"Most provokingly so," said he. "But you will easily guess that it is my misfortune, not my fault. We have had an interminable debate; and Heaven only knows when I should have got away, if I had not paired off with Vavasour, who was equally impatient to pay

his respects here. By the way, he has made a brilliant speech to-night. You may rely on the testimony of a political adversary."

Miss Callendar's eye brightened and her cheek glowed as the hostess answered, playfully, "You are an unusually candid politician: liberal in every respect. But," continued she, "did you say that Captain Vavasour was coming?"

"He is in the house at this moment," said Lumley. "I left him on the stairs, where he had been just victimized by a talkative elderly gentleman, who was congratulating him on his new appointment; and, as I saw no chance of his button being released, I left him to his fate."

"What appointment?" inquired Mrs. Harcourt Evans, Miss Callendar being all attention to hear the reply.

"Have you not heard? he is to be the new lord of the admiralty: but talk of his satanic majesty—you know the saying—here he is."

Vavasour made his appearance accordingly; and, after paying his respects to Mrs. Harcourt Evans, approached Miss Callendar. Despite of the momentary gleam of satisfaction which shot across his features, the latter could not help observing that he wore an aspect but little in accordance with his recent parliamentary triumph, or his reported official appointment. The careworn expression of his countenance was too evident to be overlooked even by an uninterested observer, and Agnes was almost startled to trace the lines of gloom and despondency on his contracted brow, in place of the triumph of success that might have been expected there.

"He is probably overcome by the heat of the house," thought she, as she addressed him in terms of congratulation.

He smiled, or rather endeavoured to smile, as he said, "Your congratulations are, I am afraid, premature; but, whatever may be my fate, I shall be consoled if I may flatter myself that you are not indifferent to it."

Miss Callendar said nothing, for she could not trust herself to speak; but the colour that rose to her cheek told of any thing but indifference. Vavasour (who was not exempt from that vanity, to which, however much we may sneer at in women, our own sex is equally accessible) was at no loss to interpret so expressive a silence, and for a moment his gloom was dispelled.

"I am afraid it is a forlorn hope," said he, in a more joyous tone of voice, "to expect to find you disengaged for the next quadrille; but perhaps, until it begins, you will accompany me to the refreshment room."

So saying, he held out his arm, which Miss Callendar did not refuse to take, in spite of a very significant look that Mrs. Harcourt Evans directed towards her, and they proceeded to the refreshment-room. Scarcely had they reached it, owing to the usual crowd that blocked up the doorway, before the quadrille began, and they took their places in it.

In spite of the gay scene that was going on, a cloud still hung over Vavasour's brow. He was evidently *distrait*. He spoke but little, and seemed almost as incapable of following the movements of the dance as of keeping up the conversation. Miss Callendar was totally at a loss to account for his silence and abstraction.

"I am afraid you are unwell to-night," said she, in a tone of unfeigned interest.

"No, Miss Callendar," said he, "I am not suffering from ill health, although my extreme dullness may well have led you to suppose the contrary; but I will not attempt to disguise from you that my mind is ill at ease, and that events have occurred which have put my often-boasted equanimity to a severe trial."

"I am deeply concerned to hear you say so," replied Miss Callendar; "more especially as, from what I have heard this evening, I had expected to find you happy, if not elated with your success: nay, if we may believe report,

you are on the highroad to fortune and—what your sex, I believe, value still more highly—power."

"It seems to me that I am farther than ever from *happiness*," rejoined Vavasour, gloomily. "But this is not the time or place to enter into the cause of the depression of spirits to which I plead guilty."

And he was quite right; for his partner was just at that moment compelled to commence *la chaine Anglaise;* and, before the figure was finished, every idea seemed to be driven out of Vavasour's head. He, however, contrived to add—

"'Tis the last drop which makes the cup run o'er, and mine was full already. What would you say if I were suddenly called upon to relinquish the pursuit of power and fame at a moment when my prospects of success are the brightest, to retire from parliament, where my short career has been far more prosperous than I had any right to expect?"

"Surely you cannot be in earnest?" said Miss Callendar. "At such a moment, what can induce you to withdraw from public life, when your path seems to be strewed with roses?"

"It were a long and tedious task to tell you," replied Vavasour; "suffice it to say, that, if I have striven for fame and fortune, it was because their attainment would make me independent of the world. It was not to gratify an absurd vanity, which I might disguise under the specious mask of patriotism, but——"

Here Lionel Crouch, who certainly was the greatest marplot in existence, approached, and interrupted the conversation by asking Miss Callendar to take a turn in the next waltz with his particular friend, the Count Alexis Romanewitz. Agnes pleaded a previous engagement; and, as the Tuft-hunter retired, to inform his patrician friend of the result of his mission, Vavasour briefly added—

"You, who must know the secret motive of my ambition, can feel what a sacrifice it is for me that adverse circumstances compel me to such a step."

Miss Callendar answered not; but, as Vavasour watched her changing colour and agitated looks, he read, in those silent evidences of the state of her feelings, the assurance of her sympathy and the encouragement of his hopes. After all that had passed, Agnes could not affect to misunderstand Vavasour's observations, or repel by coldness the expression of an attachment which her own conduct towards him had latterly appeared to sanction. She loved Frank Vavasour: she had loved him long —even before he had ventured to hint that devotion which his whole behaviour had rendered sufficiently intelligible. Prepared as she certainly was to bestow on Vavasour her hand and fortune, her scruples of delicacy forbade her to give him any hopes until every legal doubt as to her birth had been removed. It was

therefore not a little relief to her when the termination of the quadrille put an end to this interesting but embarrassing conversation, which had been carried on between them, *sotto voce*, in the intervals of the figure, under shelter, be it observed, of Weippert's full band, and the universal buzz of talk that prevailed, every one being too much occupied with their own particular flirtation to pay much attention to their neighbours.

But, although Miss Callendar had been obliged to relinquish Vavasour's arm, to fulfil an engagement in the following waltz, without replying to the pointed observations he had made, he did not feel disheartened at her silence; and as he seated himself on an ottoman as far apart from the rest of the company as possible, with a view of indulging in "sweet and bitter fancy," his despondency was not altogether uncheered by some reflections of a consolatory character.

But Vavasour was not left long to the

solitary enjoyment of his own thoughts; for Lionel Crouch approached, and commenced his usual dissertation on lords and ladies, calling Vavasour's attention to the noble list of partners that he himself had danced with, and assuring him that two of the greatest *partis* were at the feet of the heroine of the evening.

This did not improve the state of Vavasour's feelings, and he left the ball-room as disheartened and dispirited as he had entered it.

We must now explain to our readers the cause that was about to lead to Vavasour's retirement from public life. The policy of the government with respect to a question of the highest importance was in direct opposition to his feelings and principles; and as on this point he could not give them his conscientious support, he would be consequently under the necessity of voting against the party with whose political views Lord

Vavasour's were entirely identified. He had written to his noble uncle, explaining the motives that induced him to vacate his seat by accepting the Chiltern Hundreds, and had received a most diplomatic letter in return, in which his lordship "fully appreciated the honourable and upright feeling relative to his continuance in Parliament."

The secret, however, of his lordship's complacency, and which rendered the retirement of his nephew less embarrassing, was his anxiety to show a mark of respect to his long-tried and valued friend, Mr. Serjeant Fawnsley, (the said serjeant, be it said, having, despite of all bribery laws, guaranteed the annual sum of one thousand pounds for his seat). In conclusion, his lordship again alluded to their late conversation, vehemently urging his nephew to the necessity of making a suitable marriage, always bearing in mind that birth was a *sine quâ non*, and winding up with the following aristocratical

peroration: "When you reflect that, in the natural course of events, you will probably be the representative of one of the most ancient houses in England, a family which can trace its ancestry back to the Norman conquest—when you reflect on this, you will see that it is your duty to consult the dignity of your noble name, by selecting for your wife—the sharer of your ancestral honours—a person whose alliance, if it does not add to the splendour of that family, will at least entail no discredit on the future inheritors of Vavasour manor."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"Farewell! farewell! the voice you hear
Has left its last, soft tone with you—
Its next must join the seaward cheer,
And shout among the shouting crew.

"The timid eye, I dared not raise,
The hand that shook when pressed to thine,
Must point the gun upon the chace,
Must bid the deadly cutlass shine.

"To all I love, or hope, or fear,
Honour, or own, a long adieu!
To all that life has soft and dear,
Farewell!—save memory of you!"

WALTER SCOTT.

A few mornings after the conversation between Agnes and Vavasour recorded in our last chapter, a letter was placed in Miss Callendar's hands. It was not one of those three-

cornered, highly-scented notes, scribbled *à pattes de mouche*, which constitute the "airy nothings" of a London correspondence, but a lawyer-like-looking epistle, the address of which was written in an unknown hand, and the seal a blank impression. A presentiment came across the mind of Agnes, that the letter contained some information connected with her history, and she lost no time in opening it; and no sooner had she perused the letter, than it dropped from her hands, and she burst into a flood of tears.

Recovering herself after a little time, she carefully placed in her writing-desk the letter which had caused her so much uneasiness, and which our readers will probably recognise as the anonymous one written by Lord Vavasour, with the intention of breaking off the intimacy between Agnes and his nephew. The writer alluded in the most unfeeling terms to the obscure birth of Agnes; taunted her with attempting to allure young Vavasour into a

step that would be his ruin, and inevitably entail misery on both parties. It concluded by saying, that if she communicated to Vavasour the warning that had been sent her, serious evil might accrue to him.

While Agnes was still meditating on the contents of this letter, Mrs. Harcourt Evans's maid entered, with her mistress's compliments, requesting her attendance in the drawing-room, where she found her hostess busily employed in arranging her visiting list for the day; and Agnes sat down to her usual morning employments of writing invitations and excuses.

While thus employed, a servant, coming behind Miss Callendar's chair, told her that she was wanted in the next room; but, so soon as she was outside the door, the servant informed her that Captain Vavasour was in the library, and begged to speak a few words with her. Fearful of betraying any agitation or conscious reluctance to the servant, she

hastily went forward to the library; and there, standing with the door open to receive her, she encountered Vavasour himself, in a state of agitation which effectually deprived him of the power of perceiving hers. He led her at once into the room, and without relinquishing the hand she had held out to him at meeting, exclaimed, in a rapid breathless manner,

"Miss Callendar, for a length of time I have sought an opportunity of speaking to you on a subject nearest to my heart; and, should I be so blest as to gain a favourable hearing, the devotion of my life shall prove my gratitude."

"Oh! forbear, forbear!" exclaimed Agnes, blushing deeply. "If I have not utterly mistaken you——"

"Forgive me—forgive me for interrupting you," he continued, imploringly. "I entreat you, Miss Callendar, to listen. You have not mistaken me if you believe that the deepest,

the most ardent affection that woman ever awakened in man's breast beats in mine for you."

"Oh! cease, cease, Captain Vavasour," she again interposed; "I feel flattered—honoured by your preference—but—I thought—you had known——"

"Known," exclaimed Vavasour, wildly. "I heard that Lord Montressor——"

"Lord Montressor!" she hastily repeated, with every demonstration of the contempt and aversion which the name wakened in her at such a moment. "I spoke not—I thought not of Lord Montressor—my present conduct would be the same if I had never seen him, or any other—this I earnestly wish you to believe—but more I cannot say."

"But if I can convince you," said Frank, in a low altered tone, from which all animation and life seemed to have fled, "that my heart is devoted to you, may I not hope that in time you will partake of my sentiments?

Say that you will permit me to endeavour to make myself acceptable to you."

"Listen to me," said Agnes, in the calmness of deep-felt emotion. "That my happiness was once in your hands, I freely acknowledge"—a pause ensued—"*that* time is past, never again to return," continued Agnes, her voice faltering. "What we have been to each other—"

"Agnes, by heaven," exclaimed Vavasour, wildly, "you wrong me! your happiness is, and shall be, the study of my future life; say, then ——"

"No;" replied Agnes, mournfully; but with an earnestness and calmness of manner that proved the firmness of her purpose; "there is a gulph, a deep, deadly gulph between us—I never can be yours."

"It is enough, Miss Callendar; I see plainly that ——"

"Captain Vavasour, you are hurt; and believe me, I sympathize in the pain which I

inflict; but can I, in justice to myself, in fairness to you, do otherwise? You are yourself aware ——"

"No, Miss Callendar," answered Vavasour, in a tone of passionate entreaty; "do not go farther: is it not enough to crush every hope in our present relative situation? do not carry your resolutions farther. Should my uncle's objections be removed ——"

"It is indeed vain," said Miss Callendar; "their removal is impossible; and I only wish, as your friend, and as one who owes you much, that you would suppress this unfortunate attachment, and leave a country which affords no scope for your talents, and to resume the honourable line of the profession which you seem to have abandoned."

"Well, Miss Callendar, your wishes shall be obeyed; have patience with me one little month, and if, in the course of that space, I cannot show you such reasons for continuing my residence here as even you shall approve

of, I will bid adieu to England, and, with the same breath, to all my hopes of happiness."

"Not so, Captain Vavasour; many years of deserved happiness are, I trust, before you; but it is full time to finish this conversation. I cannot force you to adopt my advice; but the sooner you can teach your mind to submit to the inevitable disappointment of wishes which you have so fatally formed, the more highly you will rise in my esteem; in the meanwhile, for your sake as well as mine, you must excuse my desiring to close a conversation which is so painful to both of us."

A servant at this moment announced that Mrs. Harcourt Evans desired to speak with Miss Callendar.

"Enough!" said Vavasour, with all the composure he could command. "I must not think of urging a suit that is so disagreeable to you;" and, bowing low, he left the room, without another word being uttered.

"And she is then lost to me for ever!" burst forth Vavasour, as he rushed from the door, in a state bordering on distraction.

After rambling through the park, a prey to a thousand contending feelings, he suddenly determined again to present himself in Grosvenor Street, to communicate to Mrs. Harcourt Evans the fearful news connected with Agnes's history, which had only that morning come to his knowledge. Reaching the house, he requested that Mrs. Harcourt Evans might be informed that he wished to see her on urgent business: that lady lost no time in obeying his summons: she had accidentally met Agnes on her leaving the library, and, struck by her agitated manner, had just succeeded in extracting something of the truth from her. As the matchmaker entered the room, elated with the idea that a proposal had actually been made to her young *protégée*, she welcomed Vavasour most kindly.

"Oh, Captain Vavasour, I am so happy to see you! Agnes tells me ——."

"Excuse me," said Frank, interrupting her, "the business is of a nature so important, that I must beg of you to allow me to communicate it without further delay."

Mrs. Harcourt Evans, prepossessed with the idea that she already knew what the important business was, gaily exclaimed,

"Remember the old proverb, 'Faint heart never won fair lady:' Agnes is young, and scarcely knows her own mind."

Here Vavasour again interrupted her: "I assure you, my dear madam, you have entirely mistaken my object in claiming this interview; it is true that Miss Callendar has refused me in a manner that admits of no appeal; but it was not upon that subject I wished to speak with you; it is on one more immediately concerning herself."

"Proceed," said Mrs. Harcourt Evans, a deep colour rushing over her face.

"I have just left the Temple," Vavasour proceeded, "and find the Chancellor has given his final decision."

He hesitated, until Mrs. Harcourt Evans, in an earnest voice, besought him to proceed, and relieve her from the agony of suspense.

"Every search has been made for the marriage certificate, but in vain; under this circumstance, Miss Callendar's claim to her father's estates has been rejected, and she has been declared the natural daughter of the late Sir Charles."

"Poor Agnes, it will be a sad blow to her uncle," said Mrs. Harcourt Evans, despondingly; "but did I hear her right, Captain Vavasour, or have I dreamt that she told me you had proposed to her."

"True it is, alas! and that she has rejected me in a manner that precludes all hope."

"Good heavens! did you tell her of the decision?"

"No; certainly not."

"Oh, why did you not? I will speak to her."

"Do not, I entreat you; for if I have any insight into Miss Callendar's character, hers is a pride that would shrink in adversity from accepting a hand she scorned in prosperity."

"True, true! and is it possible you were willing to marry her, knowing all you did of her sad reverses?"

"Have I not proved it, my dear madam?" replied Vavasour.

"Your conduct is noble and generous," said the lady, "and deserves a better fate: but, after all, you would have starved together, for your uncle would never have forgiven you."

"How could I think of that at such a time? My own fortune, though small, would have sufficed with Agnes; and what a comfort it would have been to have devoted a whole life to her!"

It would be needless to attempt to describe Mrs. Harcourt Evans's feelings at this disclosure; for though, as we have said before, she was not without her foibles and absurdities, she had withal a far greater share of real kindness of heart than generally falls to the lot of that class called very good sort of people.

Thanking her for her sympathy, and anxious to tear himself away from the scene of such bitter disappointment, he took his leave. The recollection of Miss Callendar's words—"I never can be yours"—occupied his imagination exclusively: but with these were united recollections more agitating, if less painful; her hair-breadth escape—the fortunate assistance he had been able to render her—yet, what was his requital? Surely, gratitude, at least, called for some little return: but no—she could not be unjust—it was no part of her nature—she only desired to shut the door against hope, and, even in pity to him,

to extinguish a passion she could never return.

But this lover-like mode of reasoning was not likely to reconcile Vavasour to his fate, since the more amiable his imagination represented Agnes, the more inconsolable he felt at the extinction of his hopes. Plans, suiting the inflamed temper of the brain that entertained them, chased each other through his head, irregular as the motes of the sunbeam. Then, wearied by the difficulties with which each scheme appeared to be attended, he buoyed up his mind to the strong effort of shaking off his love, and resuming the profession which his unrequited affection had so fruitlessly interrupted.

While brooding over this sturdy resolution, he endeavoured to fortify himself by every argument which pride, as well as reason, could suggest.

"She shall not suppose," he said, "that, presuming on an accidental service, I am de-

sirous to intrude myself upon that attention to which, personally, she considers me as having no title. I will see her no more. I will leave this country, never again to return to it."

But we must return to Agnes. Although she would have infinitely preferred spending the day alone, in order to compose her spirits, and think calmly over the change that a few minutes had made in her prospects of life, yet, not conceiving that she had a sufficient excuse for doing so, she prepared to obey Mrs. Harcourt Evans's summons to accompany her in her usual drive. What a contrast was that gay scene—the Park — to her dark and dismal feelings! All around spoke of joy, lightness of heart, and happiness. London now became hourly more distasteful to Agnes, and, with a secret impatience, did she look forward to the time when her guardian had promised to recall her to Harefield; but she felt too grateful for Mrs. Harcourt

Evans's unremitting kindnesses to express a wish to accelerate that period, and she sank unresistingly under the decree of fate.

But, whatever might be the secret perturbations of Miss Callendar's feelings under a trial so grievous and so perplexing, there was not the slightest trace of agitation to be discerned in the composure of her ordinary address and gentle courtesy. She appeared to have taken her resolution without hesitation and without pain. But, however it had been framed, she extended not the secret to Mrs. Harcourt Evans, who, on her own part, was too delicate and too considerate to intrude uninvited upon her confidence. Sometimes, indeed, when the kind widow, moved by the sympathy of a generous heart, was tempted to display towards her young friend a more than ordinary measure of tenderness and affection, and, in her desire to divert her from herself, urged her to some new project of amusement, Agnes, as if jealous of her sus-

picions, would rouse herself to an unnatural degree of vivacity, and take her part as formerly in the daily routine of senseless amusement.

Meanwhile, the hectic cheek and fevered eye, that to others told only of more vivid beauty, escaped not the cool but scrutinizing gaze of Mrs. Harcourt Evans. With the true delicacy of female regard, she sought not for any explanation of those feelings which it was too evident Agnes vainly endeavoured to subdue. Yet some few words of renovated kindness, or implied security, occasionally shed a beam of comfort on her agitated spirits, and more than once the considerate attention of this judicious friend had in some degree composed that despondency of mind which otherwise would have given way to utter despair.

Mrs. Harcourt Evans had issued cards for a *soirée*, and Vavasour had received a special invitation. The evening arrived, and a small party (a London small party of one hundred)

were assembled. Music was soon proposed, and seemed to meet the wishes of all.

"Do you play the harp, Miss Callendar?" inquired Lady Dalton.

"A little," was the unassuming reply.

"The worst of the harp is, every girl plays it 'a little,'" observed Miss Dalton, to Mrs. Harcourt Evans, as she assisted her in arranging her music-books, preparatory to her commencing a grand fantasia of Bochsa's, in which she was vehemently applauded. Then came a solo on the pianoforte by a young lady, one of Moschelles's best pupils, as her mamma pronounced her to be. At last Mrs. Harcourt Evans asked Agnes to take her place at the piano, which she accordingly did without affectation, and at once broke out into the symphony of that beautiful ballad, the music of which is attributed to the all-accomplished Duchess of Devonshire. Nothing could exceed the deep pathos her exquisite voice gave to those words which bore

so strong an analogy to her own sad feelings—

> "I have a silent sorrow here,
> A grief I'll ne'er impart:
> It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
> But it consumes my heart."

And when the stirring tones of that full and powerful voice gradually subsided into a minor, and from that mournful transition into a close of the tenderest beauty, it seemed to realize the poet's illustration of the nightingale singing with the thorn in its breast.

It has been said that the voice of nature is the voice of truth, and this was verified in Agnes's singing, which went directly to the heart of all those whose tastes were not vitiated by a sophisticated and often ignorant adoption of such rules of criticism as owe their only currency to the stamp of fashion. Vavasour was spell-bound. Every feeling of his heart was more than ever centred in Agnes, and he felt that some exertion must

be made to free himself from "pangs that rent his heart in twain."

It is a generally-admitted axiom that "abstinence is less difficult than moderation," and so thought Vavasour, for, failing in his project of philosophically decreasing his happiness gradually, he came to the resolution of abandoning it altogether, and, in less than a month from the interview we have recorded in the former part of this chapter, the newspapers announced the appointment of Captain Vavasour (who had accepted the Chiltern Hundreds) to H. M. brig Miranda.

Vavasour had sought this command in the hope that, by forcing his mind into active employment, he might find some relief from that disappointment of all his earthly hopes, which he found was making alarming inroads on his peace of mind, and even on his health.

Up to the period of his departure, he had scarcely seen Agnes Callendar, and, when they

did meet, it was only in a crowded room, and he fancied her manner changed: there was an averted look, a slight tremor in her hand, though it was extended as usual. Each time Lord Montressor was by her side, and each time, when Vavasour's eyes met Agnes's, the blush which tinged her cheek appeared to his jealous fancy to avow the consciousness of deserving his censure.

One day, when Agnes was ruminating over her destiny, and thinking of one so intimately connected with it, the door slowly opened, and Vavasour himself appeared. His cheeks were flushed, and, hurrying up to her, he sat down at her side, and took her hand, but at first appeared totally unable to speak. In a few moments, however, making a violent effort to command himself,

"Miss Callendar," said he, "you cannot have imputed the manner in which I have of late estranged myself from you to want of kind feeling upon my part. I thought this

separation was the best thing for us both." Agnes replied not, and he continued: "I could not, however, leave England for the coast of Africa without taking leave of you."

"Leave England for the coast of Africa!" echoed Miss Callendar, mournfully.

"Yes; in foreign countries, I hope to regain that relief to my wounded feelings which a total change of scene and a course of regular occupation seldom fail to produce." Agnes being still silent, "I hope," continued Vavasour, "to be at Plymouth to-morrow evening."

At this moment, Mrs. Harcourt Evans entered the room, and, approaching Vavasour, kindly extended her hand.

"I hope," she said, "you are to be of our party to Greenwich to-day. The carriage is ready, Agnes; and the steam-boat leaves Whitehall stairs punctually at twelve."

Vavasour closely bit his quivering lips, and, explaining his proposed departure, took leave

of Mrs. Harcourt Evans. He then approached Agnes, and drew her arm within his. As they descended the stairs together, he uttered not a word. The hand which pressed his arm trembled violently, and he felt one convulsive grasp as he placed her in the carriage. At this moment Lord Montressor's cabriolet drove up. Vavasour looked round; Agnes was gone.

Vavasour reached Plymouth late on the following day, and, driving up to the Royal Hotel, he found two of his boat's crew in attendance at the door. The coxswain made his way to the chaise window, and, respectfully touching his hat, put into his commander's hands a letter, the purport of which required his appearance at the Admiral's Office immediately on his arrival, and, as the order was countersigned "Urgent," he proceeded on in the same chaise, without alighting, especially as he was informed the boat was waiting for him at Mount Wise, in Stonehouse Pool.

He had taken the coxswain in with him,

and on their road the man stated that orders had been sent on board by the admiral to prepare for sailing, and he believed their destination was the Coast of Africa. In consequence of this, the first lieutenant had got the brig unmoored, and she was now lying in the Sound, a "short stay peak" on the small bower, with the topsails sheeted home and hoisted, and the yards braced ready for casting.

Vavasour had an interview with the admiral, (which lasted, however, but a few minutes) and, having received his instructions, he hurried to the boat, the sailors having previously stowed away the luggage he had brought with him in the chaise.

Evening was on the advance, the breeze was blowing freshly from the eastward, and the scud was flying swiftly before it; the swelling waves, as they came rolling on the shore, broke upon the rocks, and died away in foam. The gig was ready, and the hurry of the moment was just suited to Vavasour in his present state of feeling. He stepped into

the boat, the men seized their oars, and, tossing the blades perpendicularly in the air, awaited the signal from the coxswain, who had taken his station abaft. The bowman shoved off, the light boat was quickly away from the shore, the word "down" was given, and the oar-blades fell with a loud simultaneous splash upon the waters.

Those who have been forced by adverse circumstances to quit their native shore, and to leave behind them all that their soul held dear, will remember full well the shock which that *splash* on finally leaving the land gives to the heart. As the sound vibrated on Vavasour's ears, it produced feelings of the most painful nature; for he felt himself severed from Agnes, and from all he loved on earth.

The tide was ebbing out, but there was sufficient water to cross the bridge, though the current boiled and bubbled up, as it rapidly bore the gig between Drake's Island and the main into the Sound, till they opened the brig, and then pulled cheerily towards her.

In the mean time, a sharp look-out was kept on board the Miranda for the coming of the captain. The quarter-master had had his glass constantly at his eye, and the moment he saw the gig with the commander in her, he reported it to the first lieutenant, who, in obedience to the orders of the admiral, immediately got the brig under way, the anchor was catted and fished, and she lay-to in the Sound, with her main topsail to the mast.

As soon as the boat got alongside, Vavasour ascended the gangway, and was received on the quarter-deck with the usual honours, and, after a few minutes' conversation with the first lieutenant, he ordered the gig to be hoisted in, and sail made upon the vessel. The order was obeyed, and in a few minutes the courses top-gallant sails and jib were set, and the beautiful craft, like a racer released from restraint, and put upon his speed, darted on her way round Penlee Point, at the rate of ten knots an hour.

Vavasour had descended to his cabin, whilst this duty was going on, but he returned to the deck when abreast of the Ram Head, and, leaning over the taffrail, alternately watched the dark frowning land to which he was bidding adieu, and the twinkling gleams of the Eddystone light, as it shone through the gloom, like the star of Hope receding from his view. At length, even that last link was severed; the light disappeared; and then, in the indulgence of moody thought, he paced the quarter-deck till midnight, when heavy rains drove him into his cabin for shelter.

The night was squally, and a mist was on the ocean, so that they did not sight the Lizard lights; and when at break of day Vavasour was again looking from the stern of the brig for the shores of his father-land, they had now entirely disappeared, and he saw nothing but one unvaried expanse of sea and sky. The events of the last few hours had been so hurried, that the dead pause which succeeded

helped by contrast to confuse Vavasour's mind, and he felt bewildered, as one awaking from a frightful dream. But a few hours before he was at Agnes's side; he had gazed on her face, had heard her voice, had pressed her hand; and now *she* was away, and he alone, and uncared for — an exile from his native land — without a ray of hope to beacon him back again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Approach, and through the unlatticed window peep.
Nay, shrink not back—the inmate is asleep;
Sunk 'mid yon sordid blankets, till the sun
Stoop to the west, the plunderer's toils are done.
Loaded and primed, and prompt from desperate hand,
Rifle and fowling-piece beside him stand,
While round the hut are in disorder laid
The tools and booty of his lawless trade;
For force or fraud, resistance or escape,
The crow, the saw, the bludgeon, and the crape.
His pilfer'd powder in yon nook he hoards,
And the filched lead the church's roof affords.

* * * * *

The fish spear barb'd, the sweeping net are there,
Doe hides, and pheasant plumes, and skins of hare,
Cordage for toils, and wiring for the snare."

WALTER SCOTT.

It is time we should give some account of the other actors in our drama, the interest due to the principal personages having for some time engrossed our attention exclusively.

Distant something more than two miles from Ravensbrook, at the lower extremity of a steep and rugged lane, might be seen an obscure and melancholy hovel. The low roof and outer wall were but just perceptible among the branches of the hedgerows, which, uncultured and untrimmed, ran between it and the road. On reaching the door, through mud and brier, a scene presented itself of the most abject misery. The room (for the hovel consisted but of one) was dark and dirty, with nothing on the walls but the bare beam; the window was stopped by rags and mouldy paper; a table, two broken chairs, and a stretcher, were all the furniture. By the side of a miserable fire, sat a man lost in thought; fish spears, nets, wires, a fowling-piece, showed his lawless trade.

It was near twelve o'clock at night, when a gentle knock at the door was heard.

"Who's there?" exclaimed the inmate of the hovel, starting up, and seizing his gun.

"Vachi," replied the new comer, giving the *parole* in gipsy language.

"Come in, Ned," said the former speaker, unfastening the bolt. "It's a fair night."

"Yes," replied the other, "for love-sick maidens, and other moon-gazers, but bad for our work. Oliver* shines, and the beaks† are out on the nose."‡

The last speaker, Ned Buckland, or, as he was commonly called, "Black Ned," was some years younger than the occupier of the hovel, of rough manners, and, as was generally reported, of a nature still more rough; his eyes were jet black, his lips thin and compressed, his complexion dark and swarthy.

But to resume our narrative :—It was a little after twelve o'clock, of a lovely moonlight night in autumn, when Mark Hindley, for such was the inmate of the hovel, accompanied by Ned Buckland, set out on their law-

* Oliver, the moon. † Beaks, magistrates.
‡ On the nose, on the look-out.

less expedition. They were both well armed; the former took with him, in addition to a double-barrelled gun, a stout oaken cudgel; while the latter, in addition to an air-gun, thrust a small loaded pistol into a secret pocket, designedly made for its reception in the breast of his outer coat. The night was beautifully still and serene: the air, without being cold, had that vivid freshness which invigorates the human frame, and gives such a cheering impulse to the animal spirits, when the sultry beams of an autumnal sun are withdrawn from the horizon.

On reaching a preserve on the verge of Charlton forest, the poachers were joined by three sturdy men in the garb of gipsies; their operations then began, and were for some time carried on most successfully. At length a man, who had been employed as a scout, gave the signal of alarm that the keepers were abroad.

"Quick, quick—hide the game and the

nets," cried Hindley, in a voice that showed he was accustomed to command; "now fall back to the ravine near Cairney's oak."

The party obeyed in silence, and with the greatest regularity and caution gained the ravine; there, forming an ambuscade, they awaited their fate.

"See," said one of the gipsies, "the keeper crosses the alley. I'll mark him for his kindness to me last winter."

"Hold!" cried Mark, throwing up the man's gun from the fatal aim he was taking; "remember your oath, never to fire except in self-defence."

This colloquy was put an end to by the approach of the keepers, who, with two bloodhounds in a leash, emerged from the covert of a dark dingle, and advanced cautiously, following a smaller dog which ranged in front. They halted, unloosed one of the bloodhounds, and cocked their guns.

"Lufra will wind them, as sure as eggs is

eggs, if they be in the wood," said the leader, in an under-tone.

"Hark to him!" whispered another; "he's on it."

"Ay, that's it," rejoined the head-keeper. "Now, lads, no firing, unless they fires first; butt-ends, cudgels, and nothing else."

Suddenly the hound, striking a loud bay, bounded into the small ravine.

"There they be!" exclaimed the head-keeper, "Lufra has 'em."

At this moment the gipsy, who had at the onset taken aim at the keeper, raised his piece, fired, and lodged the contents in the bloodhound's body. A yell of agony escaped the dying animal, and then the clicking of a lock was heard.

"Fire!" cried the head-keeper: the order was obeyed—nothing stirred. "Forward, my lads, I know they are here," continued the speaker, "there's one behind the holly clump; I'll bring him down."

The keeper was as good as his word; he fired, and Ned Buckland fell wounded.

"Hurrah, my lads! forward," shouted the whole party. The poachers allowed the enemy to advance: at a signal given by Hindley, their pieces were all fired at once, and the head-keeper received a fatal shot! The poachers, taking advantage of the consternation, lost no time in escaping, and conveying their wounded companion to a secret haunt in the extremity of the forest.

An enormity like this could not fail to lead to a decisive catastrophe. The magistrates assembled to deliberate upon the most effectual means of breaking up this atrocious gang; a reward of two hundred pounds was offered to any one who would bring the offenders to justice; and all the hardy yeomen of the neighbourhood joined an expedition, headed by the keepers, to scour the forest where it was strongly suspected some of the gang still lurked.

The plan arranged was, to surround the wood, contracting the circle by degrees, by which the escape of the poachers would be rendered impossible. Buckland, as we have already said, had been severely wounded in the affray with the keepers, and nothing could induce Mark Hindley to leave him. A small hoop tent, which the latter had procured from a neighbouring camp of gipsies, formed their rude habitation; a small fire on the ground, with a kettle hanging over it, hitched on cross sticks, added in some little degree to their comfort. On a straw pallet, with his arm and forehead bandaged up, lay extended the wounded man; by his side sat Barbara Cooper—his wife in all but name—one who in thought, word, and deed, had "loved, honoured, and obeyed." No sooner had she heard of Edward Buckland's danger, than she left her wild home to administer to his comforts, to soothe and cheer him in the hour of ill.

The second evening had closed in; Hindley

was busily employed arranging some wires, and Barbara, taking advantage of a slight slumber Buckland had fallen into, was repairing a net, when she suddenly exclaimed,

"Hark! I heard a noise."

The terrified girl put her ear to the ground, and listened breathlessly.

"Yes—it is the keeper's whistle. Ned—Ned, awake!"

The wounded man started up, and tried to seize a pistol which hung by his side. The exertion was too much, and he fell back languidly on his rude couch. Barbara poured the contents of a small phial into his parched throat, and he shortly gave signs of recovery.

"Dowse the glims,"* exclaimed Hindley, in an under voice.

In an instant the fire was extinguished, an old wet sack was thrown over the embers, and silence commanded.

"Prepare for defence," cried Mark, starting

* Dowse the glims—put out the lights.

up, as the rustling noise in the thicket proved that the gipsy girl's fears were but too true, and that the keepers were upon their track; a glare of torches now showed the extent of the force.

"Arm yourself, Barbara—the air-gun—the pistol—wait for the word—why! what's the matter with the girl?—they approach."

Poor Barbara heeded him not; her all-absorbing thought was Edward. Kneeling by his side, she gently murmured, in her own gipsy tongue: "Ache mai deviel (may God bless thee!). Edward, we'll die together."

"Rouse yourself, girl! their numbers are less than I first thought they were," cried Hindley, now raised to a pitch of frenzy.

"Surrender, or we fire!" exclaimed the leader of the keeper's party.

"Never!" replied the poacher, now driven to desperation.

"Make ready," continued the first speaker; "present,"—and the word fire would have

escaped his lips, had it not been for Barbara Cooper, who, with that courage which the female sex possess to a most extraordinary degree in the hour of imminent danger, now stood, a second Helen M'Gregor, armed and prepared to sell her own and Edward's life dearly.

"Recover arms," cried the keeper. "Resistance is useless; our numbers must overpower you."

At this moment a rustling in the leaves announced the approach of the remaining party in the rear of the poachers' haunt.

"Why add the murder of an innocent woman," resumed the speaker, "to your other crimes?"

Hindley paused: his thoughts in quick succession reverted to the days when he himself had felt woman's power; he gazed upon the young gipsy, a tear stood on her beautiful eyelids, a suppressed cry of terror escaped her, as a groan from the wounded man reached

her ears. Mark's better nature now triumphed, and, throwing his arms down, he surrendered himself to the keepers.

Every attention was paid to the suffering Buckland, who was conveyed upon a litter to the hospital of the county goal; where also Mark Hindley, guarded by an armed party, was escorted. The gipsy girl, Barbara Cooper, was allowed to go free.

The coroner's inquest being justly considered as one of the most important and valuable institutions of our country, its functions in the provinces are commonly delegated to the most obtuse and ignorant members of the community! The rich and the intelligent have always influence enough to evade its duties; so that the "crowner's-quest law" generally devolves upon some dozen dunderheaded boobies, who serve habitually as jurymen for the parish in which they may happen to reside. They follow implicitly their leader, the foreman; who as implicitly follows *his*

leader, the coroner; the latter personage being usually a perfect Dogberry, furnished with a few technical terms and legal distinctions, which enable him to decide between Accidental Death, Found Drowned, Wilful Murder, Justifiable Homicide, and Felo-de-se.

Whether Mr. Quillet, the official functionary of Ravensbrook, belonged to this class, will be seen by the proceedings. The preparations for the inquest had been made in "the parlour" of the Robin Hood, a small wayside public-house, near the skirts of the wood where the unfortunate gamekeeper was murdered. The room was small, and incapable of accommodating the numerous persons who had been attracted by curiosity and idleness.

A vacant arm-chair awaited the occupation of the coroner. At the head of the long table, on its right, sat Mr. Tubbs, ex, or rather double XX brewer, the foreman, and on either side the rest of the jurors, with serious countenances, all decidedly conscious of the tem-

porary importance with which their office invested them, and as resolutely silent as if they had all been engaged as a party of mutes.

As far aloof as the size of the room permitted, Sir Walter Callendar, the Reverend Mr. Walford, and another county magistrate took their stations. Old Luke, the gamekeeper, with his assistants, formed a group apart, one of the latter holding the fatal double-barrelled gun, and a few of the tenantry completed the presence.

There was no conversation, unless a brief occasional whisper might be called so. This silence was, however, speedily broken by the sound of a footstep, and the clamour of several tongues, above which the stentorian voice of the landlord of the Robin Hood was distinctly recognised.

"This way, Mr. Quillet; the jury are assembled; would you like to take a glass of any thing after your ride?"

"No, no, Mr. Harris; business first, pleasure afterwards: show me to the inquest-room."

The landlord bustled along the passage, and, opening the "parlour" door, announced Mr. Quillet, an over-smartly dressed, bustling little man, with a florid countenance, edged with much black whisker. He wore his hat — a silk hat—on one side of his head, a coloured handkerchief round his neck, and a pair of glazed top-boots on his nether ends; a chain, questionable as to metal, guarded an equivocal watch over a velvet waistcoat. Such was Mr. Quillet, attorney-at-law, and coroner for the county.

"Good morning, Sir Walter—proud of the honour of meeting you. Good day, Mr. Walford. Mr. Tubbs, your servant. Trust I have not kept the gentlemen of the jury waiting. Sharp work for one day; a found drowned, accidental death, and a died from want at the

Union. Mr. Foreman, count the jury. Witnesses in attendance, Mr. Smith?"

This latter speech was addressed to his clerk, a tall, spare, sallow-looking man, with long, straight, black hair, his coat brownish-black, his linen begrimed with three days' dirt, his hands red and gloveless. Mr. Smith nodded assent.

"Now, gentlemen, if you please, we'll view —where's the body? Mr. Harris, show the way."

And, jumping from his chair, the coroner, accompanied by his twelve satellites, followed the landlord to a small outhouse, where the body lay, and, after a momentary glance, returned to the inquest-room.

"Well, gentlemen, you've seen the deceased — very simple — lies in a nutshell — where is the principal witness? Mr. Smith, swear Luke Palmer."

The gamekeeper being duly sworn, proceeded to relate the occurrences of the night

upon which Joseph Moorsom was murdered, and which our readers are already acquainted with.

"That will do, sir," said the coroner — "very clear. Well, gentlemen, you have heard all — capital evidence — needn't read it over — obliged to be at Alderley at three. Mr. Smith, be kind enough to order my chay. Gentlemen, you have heard the case; you must dismiss all prejudice; there can't be two opinions as to who the murderer is. Poaching horrible crime — leads to the gallows. If you've a doubt, you'll give the suspected party the benefit of it. Mr. Smith, take down the verdict."

A pause ensued for some minutes. The twelve jurors turned round, and buzzed together like so many huge bluebottles for a few minutes, during which brief period, Mr. Quillet got very testy and impatient, for, to let the reader into a secret, he had not dined.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Quillet, "I should be sorry to hurry your decision, or to interfere with you in the conscientious discharge of your duty; but time is precious—the servants of the public——"

Here the tirade was interrupted by Mr. Tubbs rising, and, looking as burly as a Sunday beadle, propounded as follows: "Mr. Coroner, we are all in favour of wilful murder against Mark Hindley and others."

"And, gentlemen, allow me to say—is the chay ready? (*aside*)—a very right decision—sound judgment — Mr. Smith, enter the verdict. Sir Walter, I have the honour to wish you a good day—hope to meet you at the Infirmary dinner. Nothing in this country" (he continued, with a facetious look) "to be done without eating—ay, and drinking, too—it's the rosin to the bow—there is no fiddling without it. Mr. Walford, your most obedient. Gentlemen, you've done your duty. Landlord, order the chay to the door."

And away bustled the man of law, repeating as he went his former words, "Sharp work for one day; a found drowned, accidental death, a died from want at the Union, and a wilful murder!"

Great had been Sir Walter Callendar's surprise when the information reached him that Mark Hindley, whom he had thought dead, had been so long concealed in the neighbourhood. No sooner, therefore, had the inquest terminated, than he despatched his lawyer to the county goal, with instructions to gain from Mark Hindley any intelligence connected with the papers with which he had been entrusted on his departure from Quebec. But this was frustrated by the attorney, in whose hands the prisoner had placed his case, and who insisted upon no one except himself seeing his client until the trial was over, as his mind must not be diverted from his defence.

Sir Walter felt the truth of this observation,

and patiently awaited the time when he hoped to obtain that information which would remove every doubt that had hung over his niece's birth.

CHAPTER XXV.

"The charge is prepared, the lawyers are met,
The judges all ranged—a terrible show!"

Beggars' Opera.

Nothing is more painful to the contemplation of those who have any regard to the well-being of society, than the alarming extent to which the practice of poaching has now arrived. Those who regard it as a mere trespass upon the property, or even an invasion of the rights of another, take but a contracted view of the subject, and have but a feeble notion of its ultimate consequences. We hesitate not to say, it is the very parent and nurse of crime. It inculcates an habitual

disregard of the law, and an indifference about its violation; a love of a roving and vagabond life, and a disinclination to any thing like work; for it must be obvious to every one, that he who passes his nights in poaching, cannot spend his days in labour; — sabbath-breaking follows, and moralists have always regarded *that* as containing within it the very germ of future wickedness. Detection in the crime is perhaps the next step; and does *murder* now scare the *poacher?* Every newspaper affords a melancholy answer to this question.

The assizes commenced on the following week, and the first day was to witness the trial of the terror of Alderley. From a very early hour the greatest excitement was apparent in the vicinity of Ravensbrook. A few minutes before nine o'clock, the shrill blasts of the trumpets announced that the judges were on their way to the court-house, the approach to which was crowded with car-

riages and pedestrians. As the clock struck nine, the judge took his seat, and the swearing-in of the jury commenced. The court was crowded to suffocation, the ordinary entrances were blocked up, and rows of seats were placed in the passages, and upon the bench some of the judges' seats were removed, and chairs were placed in their stead; all the chief places being filled with persons of distinction in the county.

The clerk of the arraigns called Mark Hindley to the bar. The prisoner advanced with a firm step. The indictment was then read, setting forth that the prisoner, Mark Hindley, did make an assault with a loaded gun upon Joseph Moorsom, and thereby inflicted a mortal wound, of which he died: to which the prisoner pleaded not guilty.

The panel of jurors was then sworn, and the prisoner was told he was at liberty to challenge any of them, which he declined. More than one eminent counsel appeared for

the prosecution, and a learned sergeant defended the prisoner; but one remark from Hindley seemed to have more effect upon the court than the five-guinea eloquence of his counsel. When asked what first brought him to poaching, he replied—"Work scarce, game plentiful."

At the conclusion of the trial, the usual question was asked—"How do you say, gentlemen; have you agreed on your verdict? Do you find the prisoner guilty or not guilty of the felony of murder, of which he stands charged?"

The foreman of the jury, in a low voice, replied, we find him *guilty*. The clerk of the court then said—"You have been found guilty of the wilful murder of Joseph Moorsom; what have you to say why the court should not give you sentence to die, according to law?"

The prisoner made no reply; the usual proclamation for silence was then made, and

the judge, having put on the black cap, passed sentence of death on the prisoner, in the usual form.

Hindley heard his fate pronounced without evincing the slightest emotion. As he left the court, he fancied he heard the word "*midnight*" uttered in the gipsy-tongue by a female voice. He looked at the spot from whence it came, and saw a female, muffled up in a cloak, trying to approach him; but her endeavours were rendered futile by the crowd that surrounded the dock, to take a last look at the condemned man.

The prison-clock had struck twelve: the quarter, the half-hour had sounded—every moment seemed an age to Mark, as, lying with watchful thoughts upon his bed, he listened in breathless anxiety, expecting the promised succour. Another quarter passed, and he was beginning to despair, when a small stone, striking the iron grating of the window, fell into his cell. Starting up, he heard his

name pronounced in a low voice; he listened —again he was called.

"Hist! ho! are you awake, Mark?"

"I am," replied Hindley. "Who calls me?"

"Ned."

"Where are you?"

"Here, on the spikes, underneath your window. Come nearer—we shall be heard."

Mark sprang up, and, groping his way to the window, endeavoured to get a glimpse of Buckland.

"I am here, Ned, heavily fettered. What's to be done?"

"Take this iron bar; it will act as a wedge; the fastenings to the grating, in the further corner of the cell, are old; remove them, and descend: when once in the passage, make for the window."

Hindley now applied the wedge to the iron bars of the grating, which, after some difficulty, gave way. But even then the aperture

was not sufficiently large to admit his body. He then proceeded to remove the stone-work, which, in time, he accomplished, descending into a passage underneath his former cell. A grated window alone was now between him and the prison-yard. Applying the crow-bar to the stone-work and iron fastenings of the weakest part, he had got nearly half through his work, when a sudden crash caused a cry of alarm from Buckland.

"The wall is going!"

It was even so—the strain upon the old stone-work had been too much, and a large portion of it was precipitated into the yard. With the agility of a cat, Buckland had sprung aside.

"Now, Mark, let yourself down; the rubbish will break your fall—quick, quick!"

Hindley lost no time in obeying this, and, in a second, the partners in crime found themselves together, with still a high wall between them and liberty.

"Now, Mark, off with the cramp-rings,"* said Buckland, giving his companion a small file — "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," continued the gipsy, coolly, taking up from the rubbish a large stone, with a small iron bolt in it, and fastening it to the end of a long, platted rope, which he had formed of his bedticking and blankets.

"Now, Mark, hold this end fast, while I throw the other over those spikes."

Coiling the rope up, and swinging the loaded end two or three times round his body, he with great force hurled it into the air. The first attempt was futile: it caught in the loose brick parapet at the top of the wall, bringing some of the bricks down with it.

It was a night well suited to the purpose of the poachers. The wind, which had hitherto blown in heavy squalls, now increased to a hurricane, and the rain came down in torrents; so that it was almost im-

* Cramp-rings—fetters.

possible for any one within the prison to hear other noises without, save those of the fierce, jarring elements. The gipsies' second attempt was successful, and the stone caught firm hold in the iron spikes which ran round the wall, about a foot from the top.

"Now, Mark," said Ned, "lose no time—quick, quick!"

"Fair play 's a jewel," replied the other. "We'll draw lots; the longest goes first."

Taking up two pieces of straw, he held them in his hand. Buckland drew the longest piece. First shaking his comrade's hand, he seized hold of the platted rope, and, putting his feet to the corner stone rustics, with apparently little difficulty reached the parapet.

A low whistle, during the lull of the storm, now gave the signal to his companion to ascend. Hindley tried the rope: he fancied it gave a little to his pull; on his second essay it crackled with his weight, and broke

off about the middle, having been chafed by an abutting iron grating.

"Ned," said Hindley, despondingly, "my chance is over: lose not yours—bless you, Ned."

"What! leave you in distress?" replied Buckland; "you that saved my life in the forest? Never! Cheer up, all will yet be well."

The gipsy, nothing daunted, now began to consider how the damage might be repaired. We have already said that a row of spikes ran along the wall, some eighteen or twenty feet in length; to file them off at each end with a strong file that he carried concealed about his person, to place them in a perpendicular line down the wall, and to fasten them to an iron spike on the top, with a strong leather belt which he wore around his waist, was the work of a few minutes. Descending by the rails of the spikes, which formed a ladder, he reached the iron grating before mentioned.

Then, adopting a plan which, in the good old days of shilling galleries, might nightly be witnessed at the theatres when a hat fell from the region of the gods, of fastening his neck-handkerchief, braces, and strips of his jacket, which he tore off, to the unbroken half of the rope in his possession, he let it down, and in a moment drew up the broken portion, which Mark had attached to it. Then splicing the two strongly together, he fastened it to the bar of the grating, and, mounting the ladder, anxiously awaited his comrade.

Hindley's second attempt was prosperous: he reached the parapet in safety. The friends warmly greeted each other, proceeding over the roofs of the houses that adjoined the prison, and making an entrance into one, through the attic windows, they found themselves, before daybreak, at the gipsy camp.

END OF VOL. II.

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